FREEDOM'S SONS

By the same author:

The Northwest Independence Novels

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A Distant Thunder
A Mighty Fortress
The Brigade

Political Essays

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FREEDOM'S SONS

H. A. Covington

Acknowledgements

It has been said that any novel which does not require at least two years of the author's life to produce is not worth reading. This one required just that. I began it on Thanksgiving Day of 2010, and put the last finishing touches on the manuscript exactly two years later, on Thanksgiving Day of 2012, a little more than two weeks after the date of what will probably be the last American national election in the traditional sense of the term. It is my belief that November 6, 2012, marked the transition of the United States to a one-party state, and that history will record that date as the end of the U.S.A. as we today understand the concept. Like September 4, 476—the day when the last Roman emperor abdicated his throne and which scholars officially assign as the day Rome finally fell—no one noticed at the time. But a once-great empire has fallen nonetheless.

It would be impossible, as well as dangerous, for me to acknowledge by name everyone who has helped me in the writing and production of this book. We live in a time when we are witnessing the birth of a nascent dictatorship in the United States, and any list of names I entered here would be an invitation to vicious and paranoid victimization of those without whom this book could not have come into being. I will not repay in such a manner the men and women who have given without stint of their time, their money, their proofreading and technical expertise, and their critical assistance in order to make this book a reality.

You all know who you are. There is nothing I can say, except thank you.

—H. A. Covington
Seattle

This book is dedicated to the everlasting memory of the land of hope and glory that was Rhodesia.

Glossary of Northwest Acronyms and Terms

N. B. This glossary also applies to the previous four Northwest novels: ***A Distant Thunder, A Mighty Fortress, The Brigade,*** and ***The Hill of the Ravens***. **Certain terms may not appear in all of the books.**

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God—Christian hymn written by Martin Luther. The national anthem of the Northwest American Republic.

Active Service Unit—The basic building block of the NVA paramilitary structure. Generally speaking, an active service unit was any team or affinity group of Northwest Volunteers engaged in armed struggle against the United States government. The largest active service units during the War of Independence were the flying columns *(q.v.)* that moved across the countryside in open insurrection. These could sometimes number as many as 75 or even 100 men. More usual was the urban team or crew ranging from four or five to no more than a dozen Volunteers. After a unit grew larger than seven or eight people, the logistics of movement and supply and also the risk of betrayal reached unacceptably high levels, and the cell would divide in two with each half going its separate way. Command and coordination between the units was often tenuous at best. The success and survival of an active service unit was often a matter of the old Viking adage: "Luck often enough will save a man, if his courage hold."

Aztlan—A semi-autonomous province of Mexico consisting of the old American states of southern and western Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, parts of Colorado, and southern California, below a line roughly parallel with the Mountain Gate border post.

BATFE—Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives bureau of the United States Treasury Department. Used by the government

in Washington, D.C. to suppress many early right wing and racial nationalist groups and individuals. Unlike its more sophisticated counterpart the FBI, BATFE seldom resorted to such things as bribery, fabrication, or forgery to get convictions. All brawn and no brain, BATFE simply smashed their way into the homes of dissidents such as Kenyon Bellew and David Koresh and started shooting. Many of their agents later became Fatties when the FATPO *(q.v.)* superceded the old ATF organization at the beginning of the War of Independence. BATFE was declared a criminal organization by Parliament and any surviving members are subject to arrest, trial, and punishment if apprehended.

The Beast—Term similar in meaning to ZOG *(q.v.)* used initially by Christian Identity people to describe the federal government of the United States and the Zionist, liberal power structure in general. The expression later came into more widespread use among the Northwest American Republic's non-CI population.

Break Bad—An incident or encounter between the NVA and federal forces or other enemy agencies that turned violent.

Bremer Wall—Heavy concrete berm, portable and lowered into place by a crane, used by the Americans to fortify police stations, federal buildings, FATPO barracks, Green Zones, etc. Also used extensively by American occupation forces in conquered Middle Eastern countries.

Brigade—In the paramilitary organization of the Northwest Volunteer Army, a loose combination of all of the partisan units assigned to a specific geographic area. In the larger cities of the Homeland such as Seattle, Portland or Spokane there might be as many as two or three brigades, each operating independently of the others, so that a single catastrophic betrayal or federal assault could not wipe out the NVA in that metropolitan area. A brigade could comprise as many as two or three dozen active service units of various kinds and strengths, including technical, supply, and support teams. Some of the smaller brigades covering larger and more rural areas only had a few units. In actual practice there was always an immense amount of confusion and

overlap in membership and function between units. As is the case with any conflict, nothing about the War of Independence was ever as neatly cut and dried as the Republic's history books have portrayed.

BOSS—Bureau of State Security. The Northwest American Republic's political police. The mission of BOSS may be summed up simply in the five words of its motto: "We will never go back." In *The Hill of the Ravens* Don Redmond summarizes that mission when he says, "The revolution is forever. Our job is to make sure of that."

CI—Christian Identity. By the time of the writing of *The Hill of the Ravens*, the predominant Christian religious movement in the Republic. The faith of Pastor Richard Butler, Robert Miles, and many others among the founding fathers of the Northwest American Republic. The essence of Christian Identity is the transfer of God's Biblical covenant from the Jewish people to the Gentile or Aryan peoples through the medium of the Christ's Passion and the Crucifixion. In most Christian Identity sects this transfer is accompanied by a very complex (sometimes downright tortuous) theological construct whereby white people are alleged to be racial descendants of the Israelites of the Bible through the alleged wanderings of the Lost Tribes through Europe, Denmark being descended from the tribe of Dan, etc. However tenuous the historical and theological basis for Christian Identity, there can be no doubt of the spiritual strength and personal integrity that the CI faith imparts to its adherents. During the Time of Struggle and ever since, they have been the very backbone of the Northwest nation.

Centcom—During the War of Independence, Centcom was the central command authority of the American occupation forces, consisting of representatives from the executive and judicial branches of government, the FBI, Justice Department, Department of Homeland Security, etc.

Chug-Chug—Homemade mortar, often of unusual caliber, used by the NVA to attack fortified federal positions and Green Zones.

Code Duello—The official protocols and procedures governing dueling within the Republic, administered by the National Honor Court. The

purpose of the Code Duello is to make sure that the ultimate sanction for personal misbehavior remains available to all the Republic's citizens, but only under very clear and formally recognized conditions. Ref. the Old Man: "One of the problems under ZOG was that there was no longer any penalty attached to being an asshole. There needs to be."

Come Home—To immigrate to the Northwest American Republic. Since the NAR is the Homeland of all Indo-European peoples, a white immigrant is considered to have Come Home.

Daryl and His Other Brother Daryl—Defamatory term used by certain white migrants to the Homeland during pre-revolutionary times to denote white people born in rural areas of the Northwest. Considered rude, boorish, and highly discouraged by the Party both before and since the revolution.

DHS—Department of Homeland Security. One of the many overlapping federal political police agencies created under Bush II as part of the suspension of the United States Constitution and the abrogation of American civil liberties that took place following the events of September 11, 2001. The Department of Homeland Security seems to have done little during the time of the revolution beyond adding to the confusion.

DM—Drooling moron. Defamatory term used by certain white migrants during the pre-revolutionary times to denote white people born in rural areas of the Northwest Homeland. Always frowned upon and discouraged by the Party. Several legal cases are now before the National Honor Court to decide whether "DM" is to be considered a killing word or not.

E & E—Escape and evasion. Associated with General Order Number Eight, a.k.a. the "Feets Don't Fail Me Now" order. When an operation went bad, or when confronted with a federal ambush, extreme danger, or overwhelming enemy numbers, every NVA Volunteer had a personal escape and evasion plan, a series of refuges and safe houses to which

they would flee and from which they would subsequently regroup. The underlying rationale of General Order Number Eight was the ancient one of all guerrilla forces: *He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day.*

E-Piece—Throwaway handgun used for close-in assassination work, usually of small caliber and cheap manufacture, which could be discarded afterwards without the loss of an expensive heavy-caliber weapon such as a Glock or a Colt .44.

Ex Gladio Libertas—The motto of the Northwest Volunteer Army, and later of the Northwest American Republic itself as an acknowledgement of the origin of the state. Literally translated: *Freedom comes from the sword.*

FATPO—Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization. A body of special auxiliary police officers recruited by the United States government to suppress the revolution in the Pacific Northwest, after the FBI and local authorities had clearly lost control and it was not deemed politically expedient to use the regular military in a significant role. FATPOs were mostly recruited from discharged members of the United States military, local police departments, and from both sides of the bars within the American empire's immense prison system. FATPOs were given a short but intensive training campaign at Fort Bragg combining counterinsurgency, commando and SWAT-team style tactics, along with heavy political indoctrination in diversity, multiculturalism, etc. Nominally subject to the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department, but in reality the government in D.C. was far away, and a blind eye was turned. Local FATPO commanders had a blank check and more or less operated as independent warlords in their districts, above the law so long as they produced a plentiful white body count. Discipline and control from Centcom was patchy at best, accountability was nil, atrocities frequent, media reporting of those atrocities almost non-existent, and any serious military purpose or strategy quickly disappeared. The FATPOs in short order became nothing more than gangs of

brutal gun thugs devoted to the bloody suppression of the NVA and any white citizen of the Northwest whom they so much as suspected might be sympathetic to the NVA. Strict policies of affirmative action and mandatory diversity were applied, and at any given time the force was only about 35 percent white and perhaps 25 percent white male. There were an unknown but significant percentage of lesbian and homosexual sadists who mainly operated in the intelligence units of FATPO as interrogators, and who earned themselves a reputation as some of the most cruel and vicious torturers in the history of human tyranny.

FBI—Federal Bureau of Investigation. The American secret police. Still extant, although now less involved in Northwest affairs than their rivals of the Office of Northwest Recovery *(q.v.)* Declared a criminal organization by Parliament after independence. Any member of the FBI or anyone assisting the FBI is liable to arrest, trial, and punishment under the laws of the Republic.

Flying Column—During the War of Independence, an independent unit of partisans numbering from 30 to 100 Volunteers. These guerrilla units were usually based in rural areas throughout the Pacific Northwest, and operated in the countryside and small towns. They were highly mobile and conducted operations against the American forces, against the means of production, and cleared their operational areas of American law enforcement, judicial, and governmental institutions to make way for the Republic's courts, police, and government. Because of the activities of the flying columns, the United States eventually lost control of the countryside almost completely and could maintain its authority only in the cities, and there only through repressive force. There were more than thirty flying columns during the course of the War of Independence. The most famous among them were the Olympic Flying Column (Cmdt. Thomas J. Murdock); the Port Townsend Flying Column (Cmdt. John C. Morgan); the Hayden Lake Flying Column (Cmdt. O.C. Oglevy); The Barbary Pirates (Arcata and Eureka, California district, Cmdt. Phil McDevitt); the Sawtooth Flying Column (Cmdt. Winston Wayne); the Corvallis Flying Column (Cmdt. Billy Basquine);

the Montana Regulators (Cmdt. Jack Smith); and the Ellensburg Flying Column (Cmdt. David "Bloody Dave" Leach).

Goots—Derogatory and defamatory term used by native-born white people in the Northwest for racially conscious Aryan settlers who came into the Homeland during pre-revolutionary times. Origin unknown but possibly originated with Seattle disc jockey Ray Sheckstein.

Green Zone—Heavily fortified and secured federal or military headquarters area, sometimes encompassing several square miles. Green Zones were used as bases of operations and administration for American occupation forces in the Middle East and in the Pacific Northwest.

GUBU—Grotesque, unbelievable, bizarre, unprecedented. Slang term used to describe most activities of the Aryan resistance movement prior to the advent of the Northwest Migration concept, and regrettably for some time after that as well.

Gun Bunny—Adolescent female Northwest Volunteer or associate of the NVA. A number of these young women distinguished themselves in combat, intelligence, and support roles during the War of Independence.

GW—Kinetic energy firearms named after the renowned Texas gunsmith and engineer Gary Wilkerson, who invented a kinetic energy plate whereby the bullet is not propelled by a gunpowder-charged cartridge, but by a small kinetic energy charge from a metal power grid in the receiving group or bolt assembly of the weapon. Wilkerson KE technology is the basis for most NDF *(q.v.)* small arms.

Hats or Hat Squad—Semi-derogatory, pre-revolutionary term used by native-born white Northwesterners for Aryan settlers who answered the Old Man's call for migration. Refers to the eventual adoption of the fedora hat as the badge or insignia for Northwest settlers, at first of the Christian Identity faith, then later on the practice spread to migrants of all faiths.

It Takes A Village—Slang term for the Federal Child Protection and Welfare Act, passed during the first term of President Hillary Clinton. Basically, a form of legalized kidnapping of white children for purposes of social engineering and federal revenue enhancement. The name comes from a book written in the 1990s by Ms. Clinton when she was co-president. Based on the precedent of the Elian Gonzales case of 2000, the act gave the federal government the power to obtain legal custody over any child deemed to be "at risk" from any "undesirable or inappropriate home environment," terms which could, of course, mean whatever the local U.S. Attorney said they meant, and then place such children elsewhere. In actual practice the act was used to take advantage of the scarcity of healthy white infants and young children available for adoption by the wealthy, due to the declining white birth rate in the early 21st century. The only children deemed to be at risk under the act were white, from poor or politically incorrect families. Placement involved an adoption bond from the adopting parents, which could range from $100,000 for older children to as high as a million dollars for a healthy, blonde-haired and blue-or-green-eyed female infant.

Longview Conference—The conference wherein the United States agreed to withdraw from the areas of the Northwest Homeland deemed to be "administratively untenable," i.e. effectively under NVA control. At that point in time this consisted of the states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, parts of western Montana, and most of Wyoming.

NAR—Northwest American Republic. Nation established as a worldwide home for all persons of unmixed Aryan, that is to say white, non-Semitic, European descent. The Northwest American Republic presently consists of the entire states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming as well as hefty chunks of northern California, western Montana, Alberta, and British Columbia.

National Socialism—The racial and political world view (*Weltanschaung* in German) of the philosopher, soldier, and statesman Adolf Hitler (1889-1945).

NBA—Northwest Broadcasting Authority. State body in charge of all broadcast communications and entertainment in the Northwest American Republic.

NDF—Northwest Defense Force. The combined land, sea, air and space commands of the NAR military. All male citizens of the Republic are required to serve in the NDF for a minimum of two years of active duty plus reserve requirements up until age 50.

NLS—National Labor Service. There is no welfare as such in the Northwest American Republic. Neither is there any unemployment. If no private sector jobs are available in a particular field or locality, the Labor Service steps in to provide employment, usually on public works of various kinds. Many Northwest workers choose to work for the NLS voluntarily.

NVA—Northwest Volunteer Army. Formed on October 22nd in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, in response to the murder of the Singer family. Predecessor to the NDF.

OBA—Old Believers Association. The official NAR organization of non-Christian religious groups including Asatru, the proto-NS Nordic Faith Movement, and some elements of Wicca and Druidic cultism.

Old Man—Early advocate of Northwest Migration and independence. Helped found the Party *(q.v.)* and served as a convenient figurehead for the independence movement during the War of Independence, although he always considered his role in the revolution to be greatly exaggerated. Served two terms as State President and was able to stabilize and consolidate the gains of the revolution, but was effectively removed from power by President Patrick Brennan and the Pragmatic Tendency in Parliament because he was thought to be a dangerously radical relic of the past. Served for many years President Emeritus of the Northwest Republic and living in seclusion. Suffers from dementia praecox due to his advanced age and is generally confused and incoherent. Has issues with ducks. [See *The Hill of the Ravens*.]

ONR—The United States Office of Northwest Recovery. Covert agency of the United States government devoted to the long-term goal of returning the Northwest Republic to the United States and Canada respectively. Regularly conducts assassinations, sabotage, and other subversive activities within the Northwest American Republic.

On the Bounce—NVA slang term for being on the run from the American police and military.

Operation Strikeout—Twelve years after the Longview Conference the United States and Canada, in conjunction with the United Nations, launched what they believed to be a surprise attack against the Northwest Republic, intending to re-conquer the Pacific Northwest and return the Homeland to American imperial rule. Due to superior intelligence on the part of BOSS *(q.v.)* and the War Prevention Bureau *(q.v.)* the attack was not the surprise that the Pentagon thought it would be. The Americans and Canadians were decisively defeated in a campaign lasting 46 days and large sections of northern California, Alberta, British Columbia and Alaska were added to the Republic's territory.

The Party—The fighting revolutionary Party of Northwest independence founded by the Old Man, once a sufficient number of racially aware migrants had arrived in the Homeland to effect the socio-political demographic change necessary to make such a Party feasible. Although the Party was comprised mostly of people who were native-born in the Northwest, it was made possible by the influx of racially aware migrants who listened to the Old Man's call and heeded it. Based upon the principles of National Socialism as expressed in the Cotswolds Declaration of 1962 and the Ten Principles of National Socialist Thought, yet offering a broad program of tolerance and participation for all Aryan religious and political tendencies, the Party provided the political leadership for the revolution, while the NVA provided the military capability.

Resurrection Shuffle—NVA term for going on the run, evading the Federal forces.

Rockwell, Commander George Lincoln (1918-1967)—American National Socialist leader. Founder of the American Nazi Party and the World Union of National Socialists.

Senior Citizens' Quality of Life Act—Passed during Hillary Clinton's second term as president. Allowed the euthanasia of elderly people in hospitals and nursing homes who, in the opinion of their physician, were "unlikely ever to achieve any quality of life or ability to live unassisted." The physician was required to consult with the senior's family before administering the fatal injection of sodium pentothal, or "hot shot," but these very broad parameters led to widespread abuse by physicians who wanted to lighten their workloads or who were susceptible to bribes from family members, and by families anxious to gain inheritance and insurance benefits. The vast majority of elderly people thus legally euthanized were white.

Shock and Awe—A customary tactic for NVA partisans lying in wait to ambush federal troops, police, news media, or other enemy personnel. The concealed Volunteers would suddenly explode in a precisely aimed, concentrated hail of gunfire on full automatic or other rapid fire technique, using armor piercing bullets, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) etc. The object was to inflict as much damage as possible in the opening seconds of an encounter, disorienting and disabling enemy reaction, before a rapid withdrawal under cover of smoke grenades or other stratagems. Also known as the Mad Minute.

Spuckies—Derogatory and defamatory term used by local white people in the Northwest to denote racially conscious white settlers who came into the Homeland during pre-revolutionary times. Origin of this term unknown.

SS—Special Service. The NAR and the Party's élite military formation. Drawn from the top achievers of all the NDF branches, with naval, air, and space mobile wings. Highly trained and equipped with the most advanced equipment, the SS deliberately follows the traditions of its historic namesake of the Third Reich. The corps seeks to erase all

differences and divisions of class, religion, and nationality, creating a true Aryan band of brothers. For this purpose, extensive political and racial education based on the principles of National Socialism is part and parcel of SS training and qualification.

Stukach—A Russian term meaning informer, dating from the time of Stalin and the hideous purges of the 1930s. How exactly this term entered the lexicon of the Northwest American Republic is not certain. When applied to the family or person of a citizen, it is considered the ultimate insult, along with the words *whigger* and *attorney.* All three are considered to be killing words, i.e. prima facie *casus belli* under the law of the Republic for a duel to the death if the parties involved cannot be reconciled by formal procedures under the Code Duello.

Take The Gap—Broadly speaking, to Come Home. To immigrate to the Northwest American Republic. In practice, to "take the gap" generally connotes an illegal entry into the Homeland from the United States, Aztlan, Canada, or sometimes by air. "Taking the gap" often involves physically running the border under gunfire and pursuit.

Tickle—An operation of the Northwest Volunteer Army against a federal or Zionist target.

Third Section (Threesec)—Intelligence, counterintelligence, security and special operations department of the Party prior to 10/22 and during the War of Independence. Created by Matt Redmond, who served as Threesec's first director until his death. Organizational ancestor of both BOSS *(q.v.)* and War Prevention Bureau *(q.v.).*

Volunteer—A male or female soldier of the Northwest Volunteer Army.

Whigger—"White nigger." A defamatory term for whites during the pre-revolutionary time who aped the mannerisms, behavior, and subculture of blacks. Considered to be a killing word in the NAR, i.e.

sufficient *casus belli* for a duel to the death if no compromise can be reached between the parties involved.

Whizz-Bang—Homemade rocket used by the NVA to attack fortified positions.

Woodchuck—Originally a term with defamatory and derogatory connotations used by Aryan settlers in the Homeland to denote those born in the Northwest, especially in rural areas. Now transmuted and claimed as a proud and honorable designation by those born in the Homeland.

WPB—The NAR's War Prevention Bureau. A covert agency designed to prevent the necessary military, political, and psychological conditions from developing within the United States, Aztlan, or anywhere else that might lead to an existential military threat to the existence of the Northwest Republic, through the use of targeted assassination and other black ops. The WPB is also responsible for tracking down and liquidating spies and traitors to the Northwest Republic, including informers and traitors from the time of the War of Independence. Their motto in German is *"Alles bekennings wird abgerechnet."* (Translation: "All accounts will be settled.")

ZOG—Zionist Occupation Government. Term originally created by the obscure National Socialist writer Eric Thomson in the 1970s. Strictly construed, ZOG means the federal government of the United States. In actual usage it is a much more all-embracing term meaning the System, the Establishment, the generic "them" used by oppressed peoples to denote the federal tyrant.

Prologue

Remember, Remember, the First of November

(10 days after Longview)

They were the men with a vision, the men with a cause,
The men who defied their oppressor's laws,
The men who traded their chains for guns.
Born into slavery, they were Freedom's Sons.
—Irish song from the Easter 1916 Rebellion

At 7:30 sharp on the morning of November the first, an artillery shell from an eight-inch howitzer ripped through the air with a sound like tearing cardboard from the Washington side of the Columbia River. The shell crashed into the Union positions along the Oregon side, and vaporized a mobile home business office standing on a side street behind the scorched and crumpled ruins of the Portland Expo Center. The shell blasted dirt and shrapnel through the air, and drove a flying four-inch nail into the buttocks of United States Marine Corps lieutenant Abdul Malik Johnson.

"Muthafukka!" screamed Johnson in pain and rage. He turned to his fellow African-American lying in a prone position beside him, Sergeant Alvin Pettibone, who was wearing the blue-black uniform of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization. "Racist muthafukkas done shot me in de ass!" he howled. Then he saw that Pettibone's head was gone. "*Fuck!* I tole you not to look up when you gots incoming, fool!"

The Washington side of the river began to flash and smoke, and thunder rolled across the water like a gigantic hollow drumroll as the rest of the Nationalist guns and rocket launchers opened up. Great

geysers of concrete, asphalt, brick and wood leaped into the air all along Marine Drive, and projectiles plowed craters into the golf courses and parks where the Union artillery was dug in. The battle for Portland had begun.

* * *

On October 22nd, the Northwest American Republic officially came into existence as a homeland for all white people the world over. The Treaty had been signed five years to the day after the first open revolt in arms against the United States since 1861 occurred in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

The historic document was the culmination of ten weeks of increasingly strained negotiations at the peace conference in Longview, Washington. There had been a breakthrough at the last minute, when it had appeared that the talks were about to collapse, and the American delegation had signed the Treaty—some said at gunpoint by the delegation from the Northwest Volunteer Army. There had apparently been some kind of fracas prior to the signing, although the stories coming out of Longview were muddled. [See *A Mighty Fortress* by the same author.] Under the terms of the Longview Treaty, President Chelsea Clinton had ordered the withdrawal of all American legal, military, and governmental personnel from the territories in the Northwest designated by the treaty, specifically the states of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Wyoming, and the western third of Montana. Almost all of the American forces were now in the process of complying.

Here in Portland, though, USMC General Delmar Partman, a buzz-cut Alabamian and Christian fundamentalist of the Zionist and neoconservative 700 Club variety, had repudiated the Treaty. He refused to evacuate the City of Roses and hand it over to the new government. For the first time in the history of the Corps, a senior Marine officer mutinied against an order from his commander in chief. Partman delivered a long and meandering speech on live television just after the signing of the Longview Treaty, wherein he stated that his conscience would not allow him to hand over his command to "the forces of darkness and hatred." He alone would stand up for "the conscience of

history and the soul of America" by declining to deliver sovereign U.S. territory to "a gang of back-shooting white trash criminals." Partman had then closed his TV address with an impromptu rendition of *Jesus Loves the Little Children*. The world was treated to the sight of a tall, leathery soldier in dress blues, his chest full of decorations, with tears streaming down his face as he sang

"Red and yellow, black and white,
They are precious in His sight,
Jesus loves the little children of the world!"

No one in the media and no one in either the liberal or the neoconservative political élites seemed to find this behavior odd, nor did they see any irony in the fact that Partman was about to demonstrate Christ's love for all the little children of the world by sending tens of thousands of men, women, and children of all races to their death in a brutal battle for a city that now legally belonged to someone else. Or if they did, they didn't mention the fact. There was already a move afoot on the part of elements in both the Democrat and Republican parties to draft Partman as their nominee for President in the next national elections.

In the first official directive issued on behalf of the government of the new Northwest Republic, the Council of State—up until ten days ago the NVA Army Council—granted long-time Party activist and NVA veteran Carter Wingfield command of the new nation's growing armed forces west of the Cascade mountains, then ordered him to dig Partman out of Portland and enforce the Treaty. The Council of State's temporary chairman, Henry "Red" Morehouse, issued a brief public comment: "One hundred and fifty years or so ago there was another American military man out here in the Northwest who thought he would use a campaign against the natives as a springboard for the presidency. His name was Custer."

At about 7:10 a.m. that morning, across the river from Portland on the Vancouver, Washington side, Carter Wingfield stood on the hood of a Humvee with a pair of field glasses, studying the American positions over in Oregon, or what he could see of them from the edge

of the Interstate 5 bridge. The occasional bullet whined lazily over from the American side, followed by a chatter of automatic weapons as the Northwest Defense Force troopers on the I-5 bridge responded and tried to bag the sniper wherever he was hiding in the rubble from last night's artillery barrage. Wingfield ignored the potshots. The morning was cold and crisp and bright, for which Wingfield was thankful. The Pacific Northwest is a paradise on earth at any season whenever the sky is clear. At least those of his men who had to die today would do so in the sunshine of their own Homeland.

Men were already dying. Below him and to his right across the river, Wingfield could see the still smoldering ruins of the Portland Expo Center and the burning buildings on Hayden Island, which had been destroyed by the Nationalist guns and mortars during the previous night's barrage. Similar wreckage still burned and cast a pall of smoke into the air from behind him on the Washington side, the work of the American artillery. The Union troops hiding in the abandoned docks and warehouses and along the streets of the little island had all been driven off, the survivors scrambling across to the Oregon shore on motor launches and rubber rafts. Nationalist soldiers were now dug in all along the island shore firing at anything that moved in Oregon. Using his field glasses, through the smoke and the haze Wingfield could see the improvised barricades, sandbagged machine gun nests, and the concrete berms with which the enemy had blocked off the south ends of both twin suspension bridges. He could also see the federals dug in to the southeast, along Martin Luther King Junior Boulevard toward their primary base at Portland International Airport. In the further distance, across North Columbia Boulevard, the city proper began.

Wingfield was a lean, middle-aged man with a swept-back ducktail haircut who looked like an evil Elvis. Rank hath its privileges; in a newly formed army where most of the soldiers had so far been issued only bits and pieces of uniform items, and where many still wore the civilian clothes in which they had just fought a five-year guerrilla insurrection against the United States, he was dressed in one of the few complete Northwest Defense Force uniforms available so far. It was a fatigue outfit consisting of tiger-striped camouflage and a sharp-billed Alpine cap with brown laced boots. In his kit, Wingfield also had an

NDF garrison uniform in dark olive green, with tan trousers, high polished boots, and a billed cap. It looked remarkably like a British officer's turnout from World War One, the pattern on which it had been based by an aesthetically minded design committee.

The camos bore a blue, white and green Northwest Tricolor flag patch on the right shoulder. Over the buttoned right shirt pocket and on the headgear was a silver embroidered World War Two Wehrmacht eagle and swastika patch. The NDF's Special Service élite units had been wearing the eagle on their tunics and old Germanic SS runes on their collar tabs ever since the Party and the NVA had emerged from underground at the time of the ceasefire back in July, before the Longview Conference. Only yesterday, the Christian delegates to the Constitutional Convention now meeting in Olympia had been protesting against the eagle, wanting to substitute some kind of krinkeljammer that would not offend the sensibilities of paleoconservatives in their ranks who yearned for the 1950s. They could not break themselves of the habit of thinking of themselves as Americans, and they still mistakenly equated Hitler and National Socialism with Communism. Since many of the soldiers in the field and the bulk of the pre-Longview NVA veterans were outright National Socialists, or at least had NS tendencies, this was a hard sell.

Finally, the Convention chairman, General Frank Barrow, newly arrived from the treaty conference at Longview, had worked out a compromise in which the Christians accepted a trade: the military got their eagle and swastika in exchange for adoption of a hymn by Martin Luther, *A Mighty Fortress,* as the national anthem of the new Northwest American Republic. It was the song that had played on the loudspeakers as the first legal Tricolor flag had been raised over Longview ten days before.

Facing the NDF, and concentrated in the city of Portland itself and around the airport, was a motley crew of Unionists. The core group, Partman's first line, was the United States Marine Corps Northwest Task Force, consisting of elements mostly from the Third Marine Division out of Camp Pendleton. But it also contained bits and pieces of everybody and everything else that the United States government had been able to scrape up back in January. The task force had first occupied

the city after a single night's running street battle between the NVA, the Portland police, and the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization had destroyed sections of the city and left over a thousand cops, FBI and other secret police, and officers of the FATPO dead. [See *The Brigade* by the same author.] Now most of them were refusing to leave, following Partman's mutinous lead, although there was a steady trickle of deserters slipping over the Columbia as white cops, soldiers and Marines went AWOL to join their racial brothers in the Nationalist army.

There were approximately 8,000 United States Marines and other active duty U.S. military presently under Partman's command, from every branch of the service, including a U.S. Army Ranger battalion, part of a Stryker brigade, and several artillery batteries containing at least twenty-odd fieldpieces; NDF intelligence had confirmed 19, but there were almost certainly more deployed inside the city. In addition to the regular military personnel, Partman had under him about 12,000 members of FATPO, well armed and in theory highly trained, although of dubious personal quality and moral fiber, as well as about 4,000 Portland cops, Oregon State Police, and odds and sods of the Oregon National Guard, mostly non-whites of various kinds. Many of the white National Guard officers had deserted or had gone over to the new government.

Finally, Partman theoretically commanded an unknown number of ragbag, lightly armed and ill-disciplined "local militia" ranging from anti-NVA Christian and Unionist vigilante groups like the Loyal Americans' League and the Oregon Watchmen, down to armed contingents of the Portland chapters of the Crips, the Bloods, the Salvadorean MS-13, and the Asian Ghost Shadows gang. Plus he had virtually every black, brown, yellow, and sodomitic person remaining in Portland, armed with whatever weapons they could lay hands on.

On paper at least, the NDF had the enemy outnumbered. Behind Wingfield on the Washington side of the river were 45,000 troops of what was officially designated the First Army, including tanks and artillery that had been captured or voluntarily handed over by defecting United States soldiers from Fort Lewis and other military installations. The Nationalist General Robert Gair had moved on Portland up Interstate 5 from Salem in the south, with 16,000 men of the Second

Army, and his forces had pushed into the city as far as Highway 26, thus far meeting with little resistance. Gair's men were now sheltering along the south side of Powell Boulevard, ready to begin the assault on Wingfield's orders at 7:30. General Robert DiBella and his Third Army, mostly from Seattle, had crossed the newly repaired Longview Bridge on October 30 with 14,000 NDF, including 2,000 Special Service or SS men, the closest the emerging new Republic had to an élite force. At Clatskanie, Oregon, his force had joined with a smaller corps of 8,000 men under General Zack Hatfield, commander of the famous Wild Bunch guerrilla unit from the NVA days, bringing the Third Army up to around 22,000 troops assaulting Portland down Sunset Highway from the west, their major target being Partman's headquarters at City Hall on Fifth Avenue in downtown Portland.

Those 83,000 men were a fair-sized army, but there were more. Inside the city itself, there were the two small but lethal NVA Portland Brigades commanded by Commandants Billy Jackson and Tommy Coyle, the same men who had torn Portland to shreds and sent the Unionists running back to the shelter of their barracks in a panic-stricken rout back in January. Although there were still active NVA crews operating in Canada, the Portland brigades were the only Northwest rebel units inside the Republic that were still officially NVA instead of NDF, due to the underground nature of their operations in a city still heavily occupied by the Union. Nobody knew how they were deployed, including Wingfield, but he was in contact with both NVA brigade commanders and he knew they were ready to move on his signal at 7:30.

Some of the NDF's troops were white soldiers who had deserted from the American forces, army and police, and sometimes even from FATPO itself. They were fairly young and fit, and passably trained. However, many more were either middle-aged Iraq, Afghanistan and Iran veterans who, while willing, were out of shape and out of practice, or else they were teenaged kids as young as 16. Some were even younger, having lied about their ages. The officers and some of the SS squads were Northwest Volunteers who had fought in the guerrilla war, but most of them were summer soldiers, volunteers of both genders who had joined the Northwest independence movement after the ceasefire

in July when it emerged from underground and at last they could be located by those who wanted to enlist. Some had received only about, three weeks of very basic training indeed, provided at impromptu camps set up around the Northwest in the weeks and months after the announcement of negotiations and the ceasefire.

The NDF also included a large and increasing number of foreign volunteers from all over what remained of the Western world, and some of them had military experience, but they were hard to integrate with the North American units due to language and other problems. They were formed into their own companies, battalions, and brigades of the International Division, including the St. George Brigade from England, the German Panzer Grenadiers, the Russian Archangel Michael Brigade, the Italian and Spanish Blue Brigade, the Viking Brigade from Scandinavia, the Scots Guards and the Irish Brigade, and the French and Quebecois Brigade Charlemagne.

Feeding this number of men was a problem; the NDF had been forced to confiscate stocks of canned goods and other foodstuffs from grocery store chains up and down the coast and from the shops of Koreans and Arabs whose owners had fled. Most Northwestern cities had only a week's worth of food and other supplies if over-the-road transport and resupply were cut off. With elements of the American government already working to undermine President Clinton and the Treaty and talking sanctions, just feeding the Northwest military was already starting to cause hardship. The implications for the civilian population were even worse; there were reports of runs on grocery stores and food hoarding from all over the new Republic.

The NDF troops were armed with a miscellany of small arms and other weapons. The bulk of them carried M16 variations, mostly M16A4s captured from enemy armories or else taken off the dead bodies of FATPOs and cops during the guerrilla war, but many also carried Kalashnikovs from large arms shipments sent to the NVA and NDF by certain sympathetic parties in Russia and parts unknown. The Nationalists had an adequate amount of ammunition for the moment, but a pitched battle would gobble it up like popcorn, and their ammo resupply was by no means certain. Artillery shells and rockets were especially limited; the coming day would use up almost all the NDF's

reserves. The retreating American forces were taking all their weapons and supplies with them or else destroying them rather than hand them over to the NDF. One of the reasons the Nationalists needed to capture Portland so badly, aside from political and morale considerations, was to seize the enemy's arms and supply dumps.

About 200 yards in front of Wingfield's position stood the Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River. The twin I-5 bridge was about two thirds of a mile long, a pair of identical conjoined steel truss bridges, three northbound and three southbound lanes running side by side, that normally carried interstate traffic over the river between Vancouver and Portland. On the Oregon end, the Americans had installed formidable barricades of concrete Bremer walls, behind which were unknown but significant numbers of Marines and U.S. Army Rangers. The Nationalist army had to cross the river on the bridges; there simply wasn't enough aquatic transport to move all of them across, since the enemy's artillery and mortars had swept the Washington shore of all boats.

Besides the I-5, there were other bridges across the Columbia River into Portland. There was the long and winding concrete I-205 bridge just upriver to the east, as well as a trestle railway bridge just downriver to the west. These were now the only way across for many miles; somehow, Wingfield had to get a whole army over them and into the Union-occupied city, under fire, without them being massacred and without the bridges being blown out from under them. He counted on the simultaneous assault of the Second and Third Armies and the NVA forces within the city to keep the bulk of Partman's forces busy and tied down in place, but forcing these narrow bridges in the face of entrenched opposition could only be bloody.

Some days before, when it became obvious how the coming battle would shape up and what role the bridges would play, a special NVA commando team from within the city had captured and destroyed the diesel generator in the control house on the center of the I-5 bridge, in order to stop Partman from raising the midsection. The previous night, squads of NDF had occupied most of it almost to the very end on the Portland side, where they now crouched behind the steel stanchions, sandbagged emplacements, and anything concrete that could offer

cover, exchanging desultory fire with the Americans behind their own sandbags and concrete Bremer walls. During the night, teams of NDF had conducted an extended examination by flashlight, some of them swinging below the bridges on rappelling lines, and they had confirmed that the Union forces had wired the central load-bearing columns of all three bridges with heavy charges of explosives, set to blow with radio-controlled detonators. The entire night had been spent in locating the charges, disarming and removing them, rappelling men down under the columns to remove them where necessary, sometimes under fire. Why the supposedly experienced veteran commander General Partman had not given the order to detonate the explosives once he realized they had been discovered remained a mystery.

On the ground at Wingfield's side stood a young man wearing an NDF captain's uniform, his adjutant and former son-in-law, Shane Ryan. "I guess now we know why Partman didn't blow the bridges before," he said. "He wanted to catch us coming across and blow all our asses into the river."

"Yeah. He was being too damned clever for his own good," drawled Wingfield, sweeping the enemy shore with his field glasses. The South Carolina Low Country where Wingfield had been born was still embedded in his speech despite all the years he had now spent in Washington State.

"Didn't he think we'd be smart enough to check the bridges out for booby traps before we moved out?" wondered Ryan aloud.

Wingfield barked out a snarling and contemptuous laugh. "You heard him on TV, Shane. He thinks we're just a bunch of dumb-ass rednecks. Even after the past five years, while we whipped everything the Americans could throw at us down into jelly, he still holds us in contempt. These assholes still can't believe they've been beaten by ordinary working white folks who finally had enough of their bullshit."

"But why the hell didn't Partman order the bridges blown once he realized that we had found his explosives?" the young officer wondered. "What the hell is he up to?"

"He wants us to attack across the bridges," replied Wingfield. "He's daring us to do it. He's got a strong defensive position and he thinks

we can't force it. Even if we do get all the charges, he thinks he can still just shoot us down like fish in a barrel when we try. It's the same kind of hubris we've seen ever since this started. That ridge-running bush ape just can't believe we have the guts to go up against him and his gyrenes head-on."

"Is he right?" asked Shane. "I mean, can he hold us off? This looks like a death trap to me."

"Maybe. Fact is we've got no choice. It's our land now, and he's on it. We gotta show him the door, and do it in front of the whole world. We have to prove we ain't just a bunch of back-shooting peckerwood thugs like he called us, that the Northwest Republic is now a sovereign state, and we brook no insult or trespass from buzz-cut red-white-and-blue dummocks. We always knew that one day it would come to this. No more shoot-and-scoot. This time we throw down head on, face to face."

"It would be a real bonus if we can take the airport intact," said Ryan. "No holes in the tarmac."

"Not sure how many people will be flying in and out, though, if those snakes in Congress renege on the Treaty and impose sanctions," replied the older man.

"Do we have any word on whether or not the enemy satellite surveillance is active?" Ryan asked. "I really don't like the idea of them being able to watch every move we make over here. Wish to hell we could find some way to take those goddamned spy satellites out."

"I think after last night's festivities, Partman definitely knows we're here," replied Wingfield. "He don't need no Eye In The Sky to tell him that. And yes, they may be watching us now on laptops with satellite uplinks. If that's the case then there's not much we can do about it. Nor for that matter can Partman. He's made a politically bad move here. For all his posturing on CNN and Fox News and all his cheering section in Congress, he can't expect any backup from his former masters in Washington, D.C. They did everything they could to stall us and divert us at Longview, but they wouldn't have buckled and signed the Treaty in the end if they didn't understand that their whole ball of wax is about to go down, including their precious goddamned Israel, and they have to let us go if they want to survive with any of their power and privilege

intact. The decision's been made in the back rooms of power, whether Partman accepts it or not. The United States can't afford the Northwest any more, and so they're cutting us loose. Besides, all the intelligence in the world doesn't do you any good if your soldiers are crap. You can't drive a nail with a marshmallow. The human spirit is greater than any machine, Shane. We've already beaten these bastards just by being here, it's just that buzz-cut jarhead over there is too stupid to get it."

"Or he just wants to be president, and he doesn't care how many more people have to die so he can look good in the primaries," said the young officer bitterly.

"Well, let's just make sure he doesn't make it to the primaries," replied Wingfield with a scowl. The wireless phone set in his ear buzzed.

"The last disposal team is coming in off the 205, sir," said a voice from the phone in Wingfield's ear. "Looks like one of our guys was hit. They're heading your way to get to the MASH."

"Did they get all the charges?" asked Wingfield. "Never mind, I'm coming down." He jumped down and got into the Humvee, and the adjutant started the vehicle and headed for the Mobile Army Surgical Hospital that had been established in an abandoned aircraft hangar at Pearson Field on the Vancouver side, as close to the I-5 bridge as they dared, in anticipation of the stream of casualties that would be coming from across the bridge later in the day.

When they got to Pearson Field, an NDF sergeant in tiger stripes was staggering off the back of a pickup truck, which had been re-painted flat gray with a blue, white and green roundel on the doors and with a bright red cross in a white circle on the hood. He was carrying a wounded comrade over his shoulders. An NDF paramedic and a young, pretty blonde nurse in camos and a Red Cross armband ran out the door of the hangar pushing a gurney. "Put him on here," commanded the nurse.

"He's a she," said the soldier from the bridge, helping the nurse ease the unconscious body onto the gurney. "She was crawling to the edge of the bridge to toss one of the charges into the river and one of their snipers hit her. For Christ's sake, help her!" he burst out.

"Do you know her blood type?" demanded the corpsman.

"A-positive," came the reply.

"You sure?"

"Yeah, check her arm." The medic quickly rolled up the girl's right sleeve and saw A+ written in black on the inside of her forearm, along with "Arnold, B." The NDF hadn't been able to make up dogtags for its soldiers yet, and so most of them wore their names and blood types inked on their bodies with Sharpies.

The paramedic said, "Kelly, start her on a plasma IV, then let's get her in to your dad." The nurse quickly raised the IV rig over the gurney and hooked a plastic bag over the hook.

Wingfield looked down at the wounded Volunteer while this was being done, and he saw a single long blonde braid coming out from under the woman's cap. "Did this comrade not receive my order regarding no female personnel under direct fire?" he demanded in exasperation.

"Yes sir, she did," responded the sergeant wearily, "She just ignored it. Don't go too hard on her, sir. Brooke's Mandingo."

"Ah." No one commented; they now knew that the bleeding woman on the gurney was wearing the Northwest uniform and she had been out on that bridge because she had been raped by blacks or Mexicans. No one knew how many female Northwest Volunteers were Mandingo, nor did anyone ever try to compile any statistics; it was something that was understood to be the case, but never discussed. There was blood running down the left side of the sergeant's camos, and Wingfield saw that wasn't all the girl's, but was burbling out from beneath the male trooper's arm. "Looks like you stopped one yourself, sarge," said Wingfield. "What's your name?"

"Art McBride, sir. It's just a bee sting. A Dick Tracy special. Don't worry about it."

"Bullshit," said the young nurse as her companion wheeled the wounded woman into the hangar. "Get your ass inside and let me look at that, troop. You're lucky, you're getting in before the rush."

"Wait a minute, I need to talk to him a bit, Nurse . . ."

"Shipman, sir. Kelly Shipman. I'm not a real nurse, I just learned a lot from my dad. I guess I have a military rank, but nobody's told me what it is. Take off your shirt while you're talking," she ordered McBride, helping him off with the bloodstained camo tunic.

"Did you get all the charges off the 205?" demanded Wingfield. "Which lane were you on?"

"Northbound, sir. *Shit!"* The nurse had just slapped an alcohol-and-iodine-soaked gauze pad over the bullet graze. "Brooke and I got three between the middle span and their first barricade. About twenty pounds of Semtex and a dozen sticks of C4 apiece. They had them packed into hollowed-out holes right over the section joins. They would have leveled the whole bridge, no question. Third Section told us that's all there was on northbound. If that was good intel, then we got them all." He held up three long, thin brass detonators with power bulbs attached. "Pulled the dets, cut the strapping with tin snips and dropped the charges in the drink."

"How hot was it out on the bridge?" asked Wingfield.

"Not near as hot for us as it was in the southbound lanes. I think those are Rangers on the 205, but whatever they are, the SS guys covered us pretty good and made them keep their heads down. But one of them got Brooke, God damn him to hell!"

"I was there, sir," spoke up the driver of the pickup truck, a young man wearing blue jeans and tiger-stripe camo shirt with SS tabs. "The sarge here carried that girl a good quarter mile to our first barricade on the 205."

"Well, we're sort of engaged," explained McBride. "I figured it was the considerate thing to do for my bride-to-be."

"He also went back for the last charge, and when the Rangers came up over the barricade to try and stop him he killed two of them with a pistol," the driver added. "Captain Kannino said to tell you that if there's any medals going for today, these guys deserve two of them. He's right."

"Good man," said Wingfield with an approving nod. "Well done, both of you. How's she looking?" The paramedic had come back out of the aircraft hangar.

"Not so good," said the man. "Because she was in the prone position when she was hit, the bullet got past her vest and into her chest cavity. She's going on the table now. Kelly, your dad wants you in there."

"God, do we even have any real doctors yet in this so-called MASH?" wondered Wingfield.

"We have at least one, sir," replied the blonde. "My father, Doctor Edward Shipman. I called him in Seattle and told him that we needed him, begged him to come, and he came down. The NVA did our family a favor a while back. A Jew did something real bad to me, and you guys took care of it. We're grateful and we owe you, and I was able to make my dad see that. He still won't wear the uniform, though. Can't handle the eagle." She escorted the wounded Sergeant McBride into the hangar.

Wingfield scowled after her. "I'm sorry if my order to keep our female comrades out of direct combat ruffled their feathers, and I know they're all as brave as lions or they wouldn't be here, but dammit, Shane, I'm just one of these old dinosaurs who doesn't believe men should send women to do their fighting for 'em!" he groused. "You of all people know I had two daughters in the Volunteers back when it was necessary, and one of them died. I saw what losing Rooney did to you, and I know what it did to me, what it still does to me every day. I'm sorry, but I won't inflict that grief on any other father or husband if I can help it. [See *A Distant Thunder* by the author.] Now, I wonder if China is bothering to follow my order, or has she done crept off to the line somewhere as well?"

"China might well disobey a general, but don't worry, sir, she wouldn't disobey her father," said Ryan. "You raised her too good a Christian to violate the commandment."

Wingfield sighed. "Shane, I know this isn't the time or the place, but once we get on top of things from the command post I intend to get my own ass over that bridge and lead from the front, and you'll be with me. We don't know how that's going to play out, so I guess I better have a quick word I been meaning to have with you now. I just want to tell you that whatever you and China decide to do about your lives together in the future, if there is anything that's gonna happen there, then it's all right with Racine and me."

"I don't know, Carter," said Ryan shaking his head. "Uh, you know, we're . . ."

"Yeah, I know where my daughter spends her nights, and my wife damned sure knows," said Wingfield with a sour grin. "You know

how we feel about that, but we just got too much else to worry about right now."

"Well, Chine and I have talked about the future, some," Shane told him. "I feel like I want us to get married, but I have to be really sure I'm doing it for the right reasons, because I want *her,* not because in some creepy way I'm trying to raise Rooney from the dead."

"We get that. Well, I hope it works out for the two of you, son. Racine and me both want to keep you in the family."

Ryan looked at his watch. "Almost time, sir."

"Right. Let's get up in that control tower. That should give us a bird's-eye view. I want to watch the first shell hit."

* * *

Frederick the Great once said "artillery lends dignity to what would otherwise be a vulgar brawl," and the pride of the fledgling NDF was their captured or surrendered artillery and armor. The First Army was the proud owner and operator of fourteen M198 155mm howitzers, twelve M110A1 self-propelled 203mm (8-inch) guns, three British 105mm light howitzers that no one had the slightest idea where they'd come from, and six M109A6 self propelled 155s. The M198s had a standard crew of nine men, but could make do with five in a pinch. The M109s were designed for a crew of four and needed all four bodies. Fortunately for the NDF, America's endless wars in the Middle East had spat out enough disgruntled white veterans from the artillery to provide gun crews for the fieldpieces. It was a motley collection and scarcely equivalent to the standard TO&E of an American infantry brigade, but it was the only heavy artillery the NDF had. Gair's Second and DiBella's Third Army had nothing larger than mortars and RPGs.

Then there were the rockets, on which Wingfield was placing more hope for this particular mission, i.e. getting his 45,000 men across the river. By hook or crook the First Army accumulated sixteen M270A1 70mm 12-rocket launchers and eighteen M142 270mm HIMARS (High Mobility) launchers that only packed six rockets, but those six were larger and had a longer range. Added to those were a number of truck-mounted Katyusha rockets provided by the aforementioned

mysterious Russian sympathizers, as well as homemade weapons the NVA had used during the guerrilla campaign, called whizz-bangs. Even the higher-tech rockets were not precision weapons, but used as an area weapon, they could be devastating, and one big heavy sustained blast was all Wingfield really needed—just enough to keep the enemy's heads down and get his first wave alive across the bridges.

Then there were the NDF's captured Stryker armored combat vehicles, M2 and M3 Bradleys with 25mm cannons, and even a few venerable Abrams M1 tanks. Each of these vehicles had been repainted in flat battleship gray, with blue, white and green roundels sprayed on them, or in some cases Iron Crosses in green or blue. Wingfield was confident his men and their equipment could defeat the Americans, if only he could get them across the river in one piece.

* * *

At 7:30, Wingfield stood in the airfield's control tower and took a deep breath. "Right, let's get this show on the road." He spoke into his phone. "Let 'er rip," he said calmly. There was a long moment of silence, until a single M110 self-propelled gun in Vancouver's Esther Short Park on the 6th Street side fired the shell that nailed Abdul Malik Johnson in the butt and took off Pettibone's nappy head. Then all hell broke loose from along the Washington side of the river.

Cannon, mortar and rocket fire ripped and slashed through the air and slammed into the Oregon shore, flashing on impact and throwing up columns of smoke and dust and debris. Partman's guns responded and a few shells began streaking overhead and crumping into Vancouver along 15th Street and McLoughlin Boulevard. Partman's gunners apparently thought the bulk of the Nationalists were further back from the shoreline than they were, or else they were overshooting due to bad intel and a lack of spotters. Wingfield watched some of the shells hit far behind them. "If they got satellite surveillance it don't seem to be doing 'em much good," he commented. At any rate, they were missing the bulk of the NDF troops who were dug into foxholes and hunkered down in buildings and behind cover along the northern edge of the river.

All along the Lewis and Clark Highway, and along the shore across from Hayden Island, a series of whistles blew loudly, piercing even the thunder of the cannon and rocket fire. Around 22,000 armed men of the first assault wave rose from their dugouts and from the cover of the buildings where they had sheltered, and started walking. With few words they formed into files and began walking up the on-ramps and across the bridges at a steady pace.

The men on the I-5 bridge had the shortest walk, but it was long enough. The aging steel beams and columns of the suspension served as partial cover from indirect fire, but also had a nasty tendency to send ricochets down into the marching column. The men on the I-205 bridge had the longest walk, well over a mile, and they were the most exposed to enemy fire because their bridge was much more open, but the men on the railroad trestle bridge were at the greatest risk, almost completely exposed to enemy fire. From the Oregon shore, audible even over the crash of the artillery, came the popping of American small arms. Partman's Marines were opening up on the men on the bridges.

The Northwest Republic's new army marched only in the right lanes, leaving the left lanes clear for medevac vehicles that scooted up and down to pull wounded men out of line and rush them back to the MASH units. It had been decided that the first crossing had to be made almost entirely by the men themselves, because of the risk that demolished and burning vehicles might end up blocking the bridge just as effectively as a Bremer wall.

On the 205 and I-5 bridges, each column was headed by a single huge Caterpillar front-end loader with crudely shaped armor plating bolted around the cab. The driver was able to see only through slits in the steel that covered his windshield. Both machines had large heavy steel plates welded and clamped to their blades to stop rifle and machine gun fire, RPGs, and 40mm grenades, and to give the men at least some protection from direct fire on their front. On the railroad bridge, a special armored and motorized boxcar had been built for the same purpose. The right flank men on the southbound bridge and the left flank on the northbound carried captured police mantlets and homemade shields slapped together with miscellaneous pieces of Bakelite, Kevlar, or steel plating, anything that might stop a bullet. The

long lines of men walked stolidly forward, steeling themselves for the artillery they were sure would come and possibly the explosion and collapse if the special squads had missed any of the explosive charges the Americans had planted on the bridges.

Back up in the control tower on Pearson Field, Wingfield put his field glasses back into the case. "And they're off to the races. Come on, Shane. We can't see shit from here, so let's get to the command post." They climbed down from the tower, got back into the Humvee, and took off for a brief ride northward.

The NDF's command post for the assault on Portland had been set up inside the Marshall House, on Officer's Row in the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site just north of Pearson Field. What had once been General Marshall's main dining room, where he had feasted blue-coated officers of the nineteenth-century United States Army, was now in the hands of white men who hoped to defeat the descendants of those officers. A mass of tables and electronic communications gear filled the room, with the biggest map of Portland anyone could find hanging on the wall. A huge blue, white and green Tricolor flag hung along another wall of the dining room, and a number of large-screen televisions had been set up along another wall, most showing split screens and taking feeds from a variety of videocams out in the field, some mounted in stationary positions and others held by cameramen advancing with the troops. Wingfield had a much better overall view of the action from this room than he could get from the river shoreline itself. A number of Nationalist soldiers wearing NDF tiger-stripes—mostly female, in view of Wingfield's ban on women in direct combat for the operation—were manning the electronic gear and talking into microphones, wireless phones, and typing on laptops.

"All three assault columns are now moving onto the bridges, General," said one of the women soldiers, former NVA Volunteer and now NDF Lieutenant Jennifer Campbell, who was in charge of channeling communications between the NDF columns. Jenny was 19 years old, a slim and feminine girl with dark brown hair, a pixie face and lustrous brown eyes, who looked way too sweet and virginal to possibly be a terrorist. It was a mistake that had cost a number of minorities, policemen, FATPOs and an FBI agent their lives. "General

Gair and General DiBella are also beginning their advance inside the city, and Commandants Coyle and Jackson report their men are out in the streets and are moving to secure their objectives. They say it's pretty heavy going. There are thousands of the enemy jammed into a fairly small area of the city center, and they're coming up against mass fire from entrenched positions."

Wingfield nodded. "Mmmm. Partman is smart enough to maintain a tight interior lines sitch and not spread his men out too thin and leave too many gaps we can work our way through, or bop our way through. I'll want to talk to both field commanders in the city in a minute, so stand by. First things first. How bad is the enemy fire on the bridges?"

"It's there, sir, but our artillery and mortars seem to be keeping most of their heads down. It's getting over the barricades that will be the problem," replied another staff officer, looking up from her monitor.

"None of the Union guns firing on the bridges yet?" asked Wingfield.

"Negative, sir. Not yet."

A low thumping groan shook the floor and was audible even above all the cannon and rocket fire. "What the hell was that?" demanded Wingfield.

"General McCann reports they've blown the railroad bridge, sir," called out Lieutenant Campbell.

"Damn! Looks like we didn't get all the charges, then. Is McCann on visual?" asked Wingfield.

"No, you said not, sir, too much chance of interception since the cell tower is in Portland."

"Yeah, that's right. Sorry, I forgot. Get him for me on the radio."

Campbell spoke into a field phone. "Badbreaker, this is Sunray. Come in. Over."

"Sunray, this is Badbreaker," came Big Jim McCann's voice. "I guess you heard that all the way back there? Over."

Wingfield took the handset. "Badbreaker, this is Sunray. Yeah, we heard. Jim, can you read me? Over." The noise of the artillery and rockets up and down on the river shoreline was deafening even over the radio.

"Yes, sir, just barely," shouted back McCann. "It's kind of loud out here. Over."

"How's it look? How many did we lose on the railroad bridge? Over." asked Wingfield.

"Not too many," replied James McCann. "They blew the bridge right when we started to move forward, and that shield car took a lot of the blast. Most of the men got off okay. Some damned fool over there across the way was too impatient, I guess, or maybe he thought the shield vehicle was full of explosives and we were trying to ram 'em. Couldn't wait for us to get out onto the middle, when they would have killed a lot more of us. We were lucky. Over."

"Either that or our artillery freaked him out." Wingfield responded. "Peckerwood white trash criminals ain't supposed to pack fieldpieces. No getting across that way at all now? Over."

"No, sir, it's gone. A good forty feet in the middle is just splinters and stumps now. Over."

"Right, listen up. Here's what we gone do. Get your guys on the move and bring your whole division eastward. Follow the railroad tracks and try to stay under cover and out of sight from the Oregon side as best you can, and then cut over on Sixth Street. The reports I'm getting indicate that the shellfire isn't too bad. It looks like they're overshooting like hell, plus if they have any rockets they're not cutting loose with them so far. Send your first brigade across the I-5 after my guys are all on the bridge, and send your second down to the 205 and have them follow Corby Morgan's people across over there. Those bridges are still up and we've cleaned all the enemy demolition ordnance off them." (*"I hope,"* Wingfield muttered under his breath.) "You copy all that? Over."

"Copy that, Sunray. Wilco. Badbreaker out."

"Okay, comrades, we're going to have a major troop movement of about four thousand men crossing the enemy's front, and we need to make sure they don't get hammered by the heavy stuff," called out Wingfield. "Who's hooked up with artillery fire control?"

A woman soldier raised her hand. "I am, sir."

"Tell our spotters keep an eagle eye on what's left of the Expo Center and all those shelled-out buildings from last night along Marine

and Swift. The Americans can still set up mortars in the rubble where they've got cover. At the first sign of any hostile activity or anything directed at McCann's division or the I-5 bridge, tell the batteries to redirect and pound the hell out of it. We'll give 'em the Katyushas early if we have to." An American shell crashed into one of the other houses on officer's row, shaking the Marshall House and causing Wingfield to stagger a bit, and then a second shell hit even closer, the shrapnel breaking some of the windows. "Hellfire! Well, better they're shelling us than our men on the bridges, damned fools! That reminds me, though, how are we doing on taking out those Union guns in the park and on the golf course?"

"Two of 'em at least are gone, sir," Lieutenant Campbell said. "We have a Threesec spotter doing a Tarzan act up on top of the I-5. She climbed up there onto a beam or something pretty high up, where she can see over what's left of the buildings along the river. She's got a set of field glasses, one of our radios she got from somewhere, and a wireless laptop. What she can't see, she can get off Google and CNN. She has a bird's eye view of Edgewater golf course, the Arboretum and Delta Park East. She's calling in to C Battery, that's the 155s on the corner of Maritime and Columbia, and also to the Sector Two mortar crews' fire control officer. That's about twenty-five pieces, eighty-one mils mostly. She's dropping some heavy shit on those niggers along MLK and all the way down to Bridgeton."

"*She?*" shouted Wingfield in exasperation. "Judas priest, did *none* of you ladies understand my order to stay out of direct contact with the enemy? I thought I was supposed to be a general or something? Army Council says so, anyway. Didn't *any* of these mutinous gals get the memo?"

"This girl says she's Third Section and she knows you, sir," replied Campbell. "Anyway, she didn't ask me or anybody else here. She just went out there on her own. First we heard of it was when she started calling in to C Battery a few minutes ago."

"Pipe it up so I can hear whatever the hell she's doing," ordered Wingfield. Campbell turned a dial on a field radio set. Now he could hear the crackling voices on the air.

"Nightshade, this is Barnacle Bill," came a male voice. "How were those last three on that one-ten on the golf course? Over."

"Barnacle Bill is C Battery commander," explained Lieutenant Campbell. "He's a former Navy guy."

"I never would have guessed," muttered Wingfield.

"Barnacle Bill, this is Nightshade," came the voice of a girl who sounded like she was about thirteen years old. Lieutenant Emily Pastras Brock was perched on a girder on the center span of the I-5 bridge, about 300 feet over the highway, leaning on a suspension cable so she didn't fall while she used her binoculars. A thin girl who still sported teenaged acne, she was wearing a warm shepherd's coat over her camos and a wool pea cap on her head. Her long brown hair hung stringily from beneath the pea cap in the standard braid NVA women had learned was best for action. Her hands were bare and freezing cold, since gloved fingers couldn't work the laptop or the radio adequately. "All three of your shells boxed him, but you were all short or wide. Over."

"How many clicks, Nightshade? Over."

"Sorry, Bill, I don't know what a click is. You were all about fifty yards short, one way or the other. Tighten the whole group up inward by that much and you'll light him up, is all I can say. Does that make any sense?"

"Yeah, we'll tweak it. Incoming in one minute. Don't worry, Nightshade, you're doing fine. Over."

"Nightshade?" muttered Wingfield. "Wait a minute, I remember now. Yeah, I do know that girl. I think she's about seventeen. Oh, this is beautiful." He picked up the mic. "Nightshade, this is Sunray. Refresh my memory. You're that skinny teenybopper from Threesec we pulled out of a mess in that Holy Roller church up in Seattle back in July before the conference, right? Over."

"Affirmative, sir," came Nightshade's voice. "I remember you. You're the SS guy who looks like Elvis. Over."

"That's General Elvis, and thank yuh very much. It was you and your boyfriend, as I recall. Over."

"Lieutenant Brock, yes, sir. Over."

"Yeah, you guys were up at the conference in Longview. I know because I saw you two on the front page of *USA Today,* having a

slurp session out by the candy machine at that hotel. Over," recalled Wingfield.

"That was in the line of duty, sir. Over," came the girl's prim response.

"Yeah, I bet it was. What happened to him? Over," asked Wingfield.

"I decided I had to make an honest man of him, so we got married, sir. Over," she replied.

"Is he out there with you? Over," asked Wingfield.

"No, sir, he's down below me somewhere. He's with his company on the I-Five. Over."

"Well, you know you're disobeying orders and you're not supposed to be swinging from the cables like a monkey or however you got up there, but now that you're there you can make yourself useful. How's it look from where you sit? Over."

"I can see two self-propelled 203s and two 155s on the golf course that are still firing, plus two more one-fifty-fives that took hits. They're smashed to shit," the girl told him. "There's two more two-oh-threes in Delta Park and there's another two guns in the Arboretum. Can't tell what they are. They're all dug into bunkers with sandbags and Bremer walls all around them. The only way to take them out is if our guys can drop a shell right on top of their heads. Over."

"They're still not firing on the bridge? Over," asked Wingfield incredulously.

"No, sir. Not yet. They're gunning for you guys over the river, looks like. Over."

"Partman must have more charges planted on the I-Five we didn't find," murmured Jenny Campbell grimly. Wingfield glanced down and saw her clenching her fists until the knuckles were white. *Her man's probably on the bridge too,* he thought grimly.

"If they're gunning for us, they're not doing very well," Wingfield told her. "They're shelling Vancouver, either because they're lousy shots or because they're just incompetent. Any sign of anti-aircraft ordnance near those guns? Over."

"Affirmative, sir, Some Humvees with mounted twin fifties and a couple more with some kind of missile launcher. Over."

"Okay, Nightshade, keep on doing what you're doing. In a minute or so I'm going to have Lieutenant Campbell here patch you into Luftwaffe Twelve as he and his boys come in and join the show, and I want you to see if you can give him a running commentary on what you see. You especially need to keep track of those anti-aircraft vehicles. Over."

"Roger, sir. Nightshade out."

"Sunray out."

* * *

At that moment Nightshade's husband Lieutenant Cody Brock, aged 18, was marching at the head of his men across the southbound span of the twin I-5 bridge. He was now in command of Company F, First Battalion, Fourth NDF Infantry Brigade, which consisted of about 80 men, or to be more precise, about 30 men and 50 or so boys Cody's age or younger. His unit was one of the outfits that had been issued with AK-74s. In addition to his weapon he carried a pack and a field radio. One of the other officers, an Iraq veteran, had advised him to do so. "Always carry your own radio. In case things get hot, you don't want yourself going one way and your communications another."

The first outfit in the marching column in the southbound lanes, right behind the front-end loader, were the 400-odd Germans of the Panzer Grenadier Brigade, although their armor at the moment consisted purely of the Caterpillar that led the way. Their three tanks and several Strykers would follow them across the bridge later, once the obstacles were cleared away. The PGs were commanded by former Bundeswehr officer Conrad Baumgarten, one of the first Germans to find his way to the Northwest. For most of the guerrilla war he had been one of the NVA's top snipers, with a kill score second only to that of the legendary Cat-Eyes Lockhart himself. He had specialized in Jewish targets; being deployed in New York City on the NVA's Operation Applesmash had been Baumgarten's slice of pure heaven. Once, on learning that a certain wealthy banker and financier of the Mosaic persuasion was to show up for a cocktail party in a luxury hotel, Baumgarten snuck in early to avoid the security sweeps before the affair, and then lay prone

and concealed in a heating duct for two days waiting for the moment to take his shot.

Almost every man in the unit had done prison time in Germany, sometimes years of it, mostly for crimes of the mind: Holocaust denial, singing a forbidden song from the old days, peacefully protesting against the transformation of Germany into a province of Kurdistan, or simply for the crime of raising their outstretched palm higher than their shoulder in public. They had all found their way by hook or crook to the Northwest, seeking out a new Fatherland where they could be Germans once again. "Mein boys vant to be first over ze river," Baumgarten had told Wingfield. "Ve owe zese American bastards a debt from nineteen forty-five." From somewhere or other (rumor had it stolen from the prop stores of a major Hollywood movie studio) the NDF's Quartermaster Corps had somehow obtained a sufficient number of World War Two style coal-scuttle helmets for the unit, only instead of black and white and red shield insignia on the left side of the helmets the shield was in blue, white, and green. The PGs' assigned tanks and Strykers bore the old Third Reich Iron Cross symbol, but in green outlined in blue trim.

To the left, the Fourth Infantry men could just crane their necks and see the tops of the heads of a similar force to theirs, marching in the same direction although in the normally northbound lanes and led by a similar armored bulldozer. This was Colonel Mike Davis's corps, attacking parallel with them on the other bridge. They faced the same kind of entrenched enemy barricades they would have to break through on the Oregon side.

Cody Brock's company sergeant major was a summer soldier, another Iraq and Iran veteran. He was a chunky, bearded, middle-aged construction worker with a red boozer's nose from Kelso, Washington, named Bernard Snow. Sergeant Snow maintained the old military tradition wherein Top actually ran the outfit for some kid officer, and so long as the kid didn't meddle, Snowy graciously pretended that he was actually in charge. It helped that Cody had been a Northwest Volunteer and proven his mettle many times over during the guerrilla war, which the older man knew and respected. Today Foxtrot and Golf companies were mingled together in the column; Cody and the

G Company commander marched at the head of the line while the two respective CSMs herded up the rear watching for stragglers and wounded.

Cody found himself walking beside the CO of G Company, a tall and muscular young man in his twenties, with longish auburn hair and a light thin moustache, packing an M16 slung over one shoulder. "I saw you at the briefing. I'm Cody Brock."

"Jason Stockdale," came the reply.

"You NVA?" asked Brock.

"Oh, yeah. Montana. Missoula Brigade. Before that I did a year with the Regulators, until that cock-up in Helena."

"You knew Jack Smith?"

"I did. Good man. I was with the column that went into Helena that night. I made it back. A lot didn't." While they spoke bullets from the Oregon shore were whining overhead and ricocheting off the steel columns over their heads with a clang.

"How green are your guys?" asked Cody.

"All my NCOs are Volunteers, but most of my company is just out of the depot at Centralia," replied Stockdale. "Got here two days ago. Got a few Middle East vets, but some of them aren't even old enough to drive." The bullets from the Oregon shore whipping and zinging over their heads began to increase in number, and more bullets could be heard slapping into the sides of the mantlets carried by the men along the right file of the column. Instinctively all the NDF men hunched down and leaned forward, as if they were walking into a driving rainstorm.

Stockdale turned back and yelled at his men, "Keep walking and pay no mind, boys! We're just out for a stroll! Anybody gets hit, if they're alive call for medevac, if they're dead take their ammo and rations and leave them by the side of the bridge! Don't worry, it will be our turn in a few minutes!" Somewhere ahead there was an explosion, shouting and screams; some kind of grenade had been lobbed or fired into the marching men. Yet the column moved forward. The NDF had been frankly worried that untried men and teenaged boys with three weeks of training, however strong in spirit, would break and run under fire. It wasn't happening.

"You married?" asked Cody, desperately trying to sound casual and pass the time as if they weren't being fired on. He looked down just in time to step over the dead bloody body of a young German who lay face down on the asphalt. To his left medevac trucks and SUVs scooted up and down the bridge, taking bullets, picking up wounded men and running them back to the medical units in the rear. Hitting and running during the guerrilla war had been one thing; marching headlong into the enemy guns was turning out to be another.

"Gonna be married, if we both make it through," said Stockdale. "Jenny and I decided if one of us doesn't, then the other one deserves a clean fresh start with no baggage. She's back there in the ops center working a laptop or something. Soon as this bridge is safe and we've taken out the trash and moved those damned Bremer walls down there out of the way, she'll be driving a truck across. You?"

"Yeah, my lady and I had an NVA military wedding on the night of the twenty-second up at Longview. We were in the delegation to the Treaty talks. Seemed like a good way to round off a great day. Emily's supposed to be back at HQ now doing something on a computer as well, but if I know her she's found some way to get across the river ahead of us."

"I agree with Wingfield's call on that," said Stockdale. "Using women as guerrilla fighters during the revolt was a necessary evil. Sending them marching headlong into the enemy guns to be slaughtered like this was goddamned Verdun is something else. We have to start proving the Republic has better standards of moral decency than we've been living with for the past century. Jenny wasn't happy about it, but she understands. She's a soldier and she obeys orders."

"You meet her in the Volunteers?" asked Brock.

"Oh, we knew each other from the sandbox back in Missoula. Well, she was in the sandbox anyway, when I first saw her. I'm seven years older."

"Mine was a Third Section spook at age sixteen," said Cody.

"How the hell did you hook up with some Threesec Mata Hari?" asked Stockdale.

"Out on a tickle with Bobby Bells' crew up in Seattle," explained Cody. "I pistol-whipped her and she tried to stick a switch-blade in

my eye. That was our first date. Long story." [See *A Mighty Fortress*.] Something snapped overhead and exploded with a flash, the concussion making them stagger. "What the fuck was that?"

"Forty-mil grenade, I imagine," said Stockdale, shaking his head. "High. They'll get the range better as we get closer. Well, at least we haven't had the bridge blown out from under us yet."

In the NDF command post in Marshall House, Wingfield heard the radio chatter of the incoming aircraft. "Sunray, this is Luftwaffe Twelve. We're over Scappoose now, ETA three minutes, come back." His voice was distinctly South in the mouth.

"CB lingo. Must be a trucker as well as a pilot," said Wingfield. "Luftwaffe One-Two, this is Sunray. Our men are about halfway across the I-5. Luftwaffe Niner, where you at? Over."

"Sunray, this is Lufwaffe Nine. We're over Troutdale, incoming from the east, ETA also three minutes. Over."

"Luftwaffe Niner, you take the 205. You know what to do. Over."

"Roger, Sunray. Luftwaffe Nine out."

"Luftwaffe One-Two, I'm going to patch you in to a young lady named Nightshade who's doing a human fly act on the top span of the I-Five. She's spotting for the boom-boom boys and she has her eye on some double-A waiting for you guys. Meet her on Channel Six. Over."

"Roger, Sunray. Switching to Six." The pilot did so. "This is Luftwaffe Twelve. Boss man tells me I'm supposed to hook up with a chick called Nightshade on this channel, come back."

"You got her, Twelve," came Lieutenant Emily Brock's voice.

"Where you at, honey? Come back."

"I'm up on top of the I-Five bridge here checking out the spectacular view. You've got some Clintonista anti-aircraft weapons moving up the 99 on-ramp onto the interstate, couple of Humvees with twin fifties and one with some kind of missile weapon. Looks like they know you're coming. Better get them before they get you. Over."

"Gotcha, sweet thang."

"Yewww, that's gotta be a Texan," said Nightshade.

"Broken Bow, Oklahoma, actually," replied the pilot. "Little Dixie feller. Name's Roy. What's yours, besides Nightshade?"

"Back off, Cletus. I'm a newlywed. Just make sure you don't drop anything nasty on the wrong side of those barricades," demanded Emily. "My blushing groom is down there somewhere."

"Sounds like he's a lucky guy, Nightshade. We'll give him a hand and see if we can't get you two lovebirds back together."

"This is Sunray," interjected Wingfield. "I know NDF training isn't up to speed yet, but didn't anyone teach you guys proper RTO procedure? Over."

"Sir, this time last month I was hauling plastic crap up from Mexico in an eighteen-wheeler for Houston Mighty Mart," chuckled the pilot. "Don't worry, we'll get 'er done. Luftwaffe Twelve out."

"Here come the flyboys," said Cody down on the bridge.

Over the noise of the shells and the small arms fire they could hear the rumble and thrum of engines. Looking to their right, the marching men could see a flight of several dozen small propeller-driven aircraft shooting upriver toward them at speed, some painted in camouflage with NDF roundels on their wings and fuselages and some still in their civilian colors. There were Cessnas, Beechcraft Bonanzas and Musketeers, Pipers, twin and single engines, anything the fledgling Northwest air force could convert into a bomber or strafer for ground support. They bore crudely clamped and spot-welded machine guns on their wings and all carried some kind of Semtex or gelignite bomb under their belly, sometimes a matched pair. These were homemade ordnance hastily turned out in improvised munitions factories in the Nationalist-held areas to the north, made of anything from steel and cast iron pipe to PVC to old aluminum beer kegs. Some of the bombs were so heavy that the small aircraft lugging them wobbled in flight; hopefully they would at least detonate on impact. The planes were flying low, whipping over the burning and smoking rubble of the railway bridge and heading straight toward the Oregon end of the I-5.

From her perch on the steel beam, Emily Brock got on her radio. "Luftwaffe Twelve, this is Nightshade. You've got more problems, Roy. Here come the gunships. Looks like Apaches. Three of the bastards. Over."

"I see 'em, Nightshade," answered the Oklahoman. "Keep your head down up there, honey. The shit is about to hit the fan."

The USMC Apache helicopters swung slowly and lazily over the Oregon end of the bridge and opened fire with their 30-mm chain guns; several of the NDF planes simply melted into shards, and the pieces shot over the bridge and plummeted into the river. The Nationalist aircraft kept on coming, and in the blink of an eye a Cessna 177 detached itself from the flight and hurled itself headlong into one of the Apaches with a crash and a deafening roar. Both aircraft exploded like a second sun, and the whole inferno dropped like a stone onto the Union side of the interstate; from the bridge, Cody and Stockdale saw a column of fire shoot up into the sky and even over all the other noise they could hear the screams of burning men.

The TV screens in the NDF command center showed it all clearly. "My God, sir, that was a suicide pilot!" cried Jenny Campbell in horror.

"Negatory, Lieutenant, that was a drone," Wingfield told her with satisfaction. "There are thirty aircraft in Flight Twelve, but only twenty of them are manned. Ten of those planes are remote-controlled drones being flown by the co-pilot in one of the other aircraft, kind of like a giant kid's toy. We didn't fancy trying to take on gunships in a full on dogfight with nothing but civvie prop jobs, so we gave ourselves an edge. A brainchild of Doctor Joseph Cord and a young techie Volunteer type who uses the name Doctor Doom, I believe."

The massed planes of Luftwaffe Twelve shot over the bridge and headed eastward following Nightshade's directions, straight for the Union gun emplacements beneath the bridge. Some of their bombs released and dropped onto the golf course and the Arboretum, crumping and echoing as they exploded. Several more drone aircraft, including a Beechcraft Musketeer and an old Piper Cub, were hurtled into the earth and exploded in columns of fire. "How are we doing down there, sweet thang?" demanded Roy over the radio.

"It's a mess, and it's hard for me to see, but looks like you got two of them at least," she told him, peering through her field glasses. "One in the Arboretum lit up like a Christmas tree, and one on the golf course looks like the barrel blew off."

The two remaining Apaches whirled and gave chase as the Northwest flight continued heading east, their chain guns and rocket launchers spitting and hissing. "Bow to your partners, bow to your corners, now it's time to *do-see-doe*!" yelled the Oklahoma flight commander into his radio. The remaining airplanes split into two smaller squadrons, shot up into the air on a sharp climb, and one after another performed an Immelman roll, leveling out and racing westward back downriver. They roared over the top of the I-5 and over the smoking wreck of the railway bridge, and then about a mile downriver, they did the same thing, climbing and rolling, reversing direction and leveling back eastward to make their second run. *"Hot damn, it worked!"* yelled Roy into his radio with glee. "Those sheet metal guys back in Chehalis who beefed up our struts and wings knew their shit! Doesn't look like we lost a single plane!"

The Apaches tried to follow, but their pilots were confused. They had never fought against massed fixed-wing aircraft before. One squadron of NDF planes attacked the helicopters with their wing-mounted machine guns, filling the sky with a curtain of bullets. The Apaches' armor held up well against the round strikes, but even so, helicopters that are flying evasive maneuvers find it hard to fire their own weapons. The other wing zeroed in on the American positions behind the Bremer walls barring the bridge. A dozen bombs hurtled onto the enemy behind the barricade, and two more drone planes were crashed right into the moving anti-aircraft vehicles, the explosions hurtling fragments of men and equipment into the air. The Apaches whirled about and opened fire again with their thirties, and more Luftwaffe planes came apart or caught fire and spun out of control, but a second drone smashed into a gunship and the two flaming wrecks went spinning down into the river like a fireworks cartwheel. The last remaining Apache's pilot apparently decided he'd had enough of this sudden hornet's nest. He banked sharp left, turned on a dime, and ran.

Then up ahead at the end of the bridge, the armored bulldozer reached the Union barricade and slammed into it, revving its engine and trying to push the concrete Bremer wall aside. The driver did not succeed, but he did knock the berm over onto its back, and he came to rest perched on top of it at roughly a 30-degree angle. "Sunray, zis is

Eisenkreuz!" shouted the Panzer Grenadiers' Colonel Baumgarten into his radio. "Ve haf contact mit ze enemy position!"

"Right, then, let's play Delmar Partman a tune on Stalin's Organ!" snapped Wingfield back in the command center. "Tell the Katyusha batteries to open fire!"

Cody and Jason Stockdale could hear noise and shouting ahead, and the sound of more grenades going off. Then dozens of flaming rockets from the Washington side of the river screamed past them on both sides of the bridge and overhead. From somewhere up the line came the command, *"Down! Everybody down!"* The column of troops crouched down on their knees as rocket after rocket slammed into the Oregon side, all along Swift Highway and Martin Luther King Boulevard, a curtain of fire and smoke and debris, shaking the bridge under their feet. "Holy shit!" yelled Jason Stockdale in awe. At the barricade, Conrad Baumgarten stood up at the head of his men and roared "*Stürmabteilung vorwärts!"*

The PGs had a company of Stormtroopers, in the old sense of the term. Even before the National Socialist *Kampfzeit,* during the First World War, there had been soldiers in special units of the German army, specially armed and trained, who had been first over the top and first into the enemy trenches. It was from these that Hitler had taken the name of his own SA. The Panzer Grenadiers had developed such a unit of almost 100 men especially to go over the top in this one crucial operation, and they now executed a maneuver they had been practicing for a week. Several Grenadiers leaped up on top of the stranded Caterpillar armed with RPGs and an M-60 machine gun, and began firing along the top of the Bremer walls at the Americans crouched on some kind of parapet behind them, while others hurled grenade after grenade over the walls. Six-man squads ran out forward carrying long rectangles of plywood and rubber matting they had lugged with them across the bridge, which they hooked together with steel brackets at each end, thus producing three long ramps. These they humped forward and mounted against the top of the Bremer walls. Then the rest of the Germans charged up the ramps and leaped over the barricades, shouting and shooting.

"Up! Up!" the shout came relayed up the line. "The PGs are over! Forward! Move out!" Cody Brock and Jason Stockdale stood up and signaled to their own men, moving back in among them to count heads and make sure they were all still together and on their feet. "Foxtrot!" shouted Cody, "Listen up! Our German comrades are over the wall! Let's go give 'em a hand!" The men yelled and cheered in excitement. He found his CSM. "Snowy, how are we doing?"

"We're in pretty good shape, sir, all things considered," said Snow. "That kid Kenny Burgess took a round in the head. He's gone."

Cody turned around and shook his fist at the smoking carnage on the Oregon side of the river. "You killed Kenny! You *bastards!*" he yelled. "Anybody else?

"Something fell on Robek, he's gone too," said Snow. "Landers and Potocki got hit, but they fell out and should be on a medevac by now."

"Okay, when we get over the barricade and we cut through whatever they've got waiting for us, our battalion guides right and goes down the Pier Street off-ramp to the street, then east into Delta Park to take out any of those guns that are still firing, and after that we go with Donner's corps to move on the airport," Cody told him. "Bresler's people are driving toward City Hall. If I go down you've got Foxtrot. You take my radio and report to Captain Hatcher. His handle is Redeye and we're Tigger."

"Got it," said Snow.

"Let's move out!"

"Papa Golfs are over, sir," said Jenny Campbell back in the command center. "Colonel Davis has breached the northbound barricade. Their bulldozer pushed one of the Bremer walls over the side of the bridge and into the river, and they're getting into it hand-to-hand now. Davis says there's no actual military behind there, just those goddamned Loyal Leaguers and Oregon Watchmen."

"No Marines or Rangers?" asked Wingfield in puzzlement. "Partman left an important position like that to half-assed amateur auxiliaries?"

"From what it sounds like just from the chatter, sir, he's using most of his Marines along Sunset Boulevard," said Jenny.

"Hmm, yeah, I guess that makes sense," said Wingfield, ruminating. "Bobby Bells and the whole Third Army are going right for his throat at City Hall, and I guess he figured any old scumbags sitting behind those Bremers could just sweep the bridges, and in a narrow field of fire like that they could hold us. Like Thermopylae. Trouble is, those John Wayne wannabe yay-hoos ain't no damned Spartans."

On the southbound I-5 the column lurched forward again at a slow but steady walk. Cody caught up with Jason Stockdale again. "How's Golf Company doing?" he asked.

"Three men dead and six wounded. You guys?"

"Two dead and two wounded. Is it just me or is the ground fire slacking off?"

"It's slacking off," replied Stockdale. "The planes and the rockets did a number on those jarheads." The NDF planes were still buzzing and whirling overhead like a swarm of angry hornets, swooping in and strafing at unseen targets on the Oregon end of the I-5 and along the shore below them.

"Damn!" swore Cody, looking up. "More choppers!"

"Yeah, but look, they're ours!"

The bridge barricades and enemy positions along the shoreline were now being attacked by the second Nationalist airwave, a mixed bag of helicopters sporting blue, white and green roundels, with M-60 gunners firing from the doors or from weapons mounted on the skids or the belly of the choppers. There were two commandeered American Blackhawks, with door gunners blasting away, and another two Seattle police helicopters, but most were civilian models, including Portland's own Channel 7 news and traffic copter with its original TV logo.

The First of the Fourth reached the concrete and sandbag barricade, and Cody swore softly to himself as he saw at least a dozen dead German troopers in tiger-stripes and coal-scuttle helmets lying on the ground or sprawled on top of the Caterpillar and over the top of the Bremer walls. They mounted the ramps, and when they reached the top, they saw that the Americans had built scaffolding parapets along the south side to use as firing positions. Before them stretched the elevated Interstate 5 going into Oregon, a hellish scene of burning vehicles and wrecked aircraft, oily black smoke, and on the asphalt a carpet of dead bodies.

They clambered down from the parapets and kept on moving forward, stepping over the burned and mangled remains, sometimes slipping in the blood. "Wait a minute," said Stockdale, staring down at the ragged enemy corpses. "These aren't jarheads!"

In front of them was a dead black man, his head covered with a blue bandana and clenching a short pump shotgun. Stockdale kicked him over on his stomach. The corpse was also wearing a black hoodie with the iron-on letters, P.O.C. "Portland Oregon Crips!" exclaimed Cody. "These are goddamned nigger gang-bangers!"

"Looks like the mighty United States of America is really scraping the bottom of the barrel," said Stockdale with a sneer.

As they continued to move forward off the bridge, the two young officers looked over to their right, where they saw a platoon of 30 or 40 SS-tabbed men in tiger stripes hooking ropes into their waist harnesses, preparing to rappel off the guardrail of the interstate and down to the ground. A tall officer whose headgear was missing was shouting and gesticulating at his men. He bore an odd resemblance to former President Bill Clinton, although a much younger version. He seemed to be shouting in a mixture of Italian and pidgin English. *"Avanti, ragazzi!"* he yelled. "Lessa go, we no gotta alla day! *Liberta!"*

"Who the devil is that?" asked Cody curiously.

"Hell, who knows?" said Stockdale. "We got all kinds of white folks coming here looking for a homeland. Speaking of which," he added, nodding to their left. There they saw Colonel Conrad Baumgarten of the Panzer Grenadiers, standing to attention in the middle of the bullet-and-bomb-shredded highway, the handset in one hand and a broom-handled Mauser pistol in the other. One side of his body was soaked with blood; they couldn't tell if it was his own or someone else's. Baumgarten was on the horn with the NDF command center in the Marshall House. His voice rang through the control room. "Sunray, zis is Eisenkreuz. I haf ze honor to report zat se First Army of ze Republic is now in Portland!"

Wild cheering and applause broke out in the command center, and then again, when Lieutenant Jenny Campbell shouted out, "Sir! General Morgan reports his corps has stormed the barricades on the 205! They're moving off the bridge and into the city!"

Wingfield spoke up when the noise finally died down. "Right, send this to all units, and make sure you use frequencies and online channels that all the goddamned news media can pick up on as well. Inform them that we have defeated and overrun the enemy on the bridges, and that we are advancing on all fronts into Portland. Remind them of my Operational Order Number Five issued at dawn today. White Unionists, military or otherwise, are to be given one chance, and one chance only, to throw down their weapons and surrender, if the tactical situation makes it possible to do so without endangering NDF personnel. Anyone, man, woman, or child with skin the color of shit is to be shot on sight. They had their chance to leave over the past five years, and it's time the Northwest Republic made it clear that we goddamned well mean what we say. This land is now whites only." Deafening cheers rang through the command center. He turned to his adjutant. "Come on, Shane. Let's take ourselves a little constitutional over there in the City of Roses."

* * *

By midnight that night it was effectively over, although the mopping up would take several more days. General Carter Wingfield and Captain Shane Ryan stood on the street in front of the blackened and bullet-shattered four-story Italian Renaissance façade of Portland's City Hall. Around them stood most of the generals who had taken the city: Robert Gair and Billy Basquine from the Second Army, Robert "Bobby Bells" DiBella and Zack Hatfield from the Third Army, Big Jim McCann and John Corbett Morgan from the First. They were staring down at four dead U.S. Marines lying on the sidewalk in front of them.

"It happened about fifteen minutes ago," said Zack Hatfield, who was wearing his famed and photogenic broad-brimmed hat and his long gray duster from his guerrilla days with the NVA out on the north Oregon coast, with his Winchester rifle of Sunset Beach fame slung over his shoulder. "I just missed it. Partman and these other guys, his staff officers I guess, must have known that Amurrica's number was up, and so they did the old Butch Cassidy and Sundance Kid trick.

They came charging out the door with their weapons blazing, and our German comrades returned the favor."

"Stupid damned jarhead," muttered Wingfield, nudging the bullet-riddled corpse with his boot toe. "Now the Americans have a legend of their own out of all this mess. The only one they'll be able to conjure up out of these last five sorry years of torture and tyranny, I think, but they're a sorry bunch and they shouldn't even have this one. They don't deserve it."

"How's it looking for us casualty-wise, Carter?" asked DiBella.

Wingfield sighed. "Better than we had any right to expect, I suppose, but I can tell you this, Bobby. We've lost more of our comrades in this one day than we lost during the past five years of the NVA revolt."

Someone had brought up a sound truck, and suddenly a blare of trumpets split through the black and freezing Northwest night. Around them the surviving German troopers leaped to their feet and began savagely to sing along.

"Die Fahne hoch! Die Reihen fest geschlossen!
SA marschiert mit ruhig, festem Schritt!
Kam'raden, die Rotfront und Reaktion erschossen,
Marschier'n im Geist in unser'n Reihen mit!"

"These boys damned sure sing better than Partman did," said Corby Morgan with a grin.

* * *

Three days later Jason Stockdale and Jenny Campbell were finally able to break away from their duties and take some personal time. Stockdale was newly discharged from the NDF medical unit, which had taken over the Providence Medical Center. Along with the remaining staff there and in other hospitals around the city, the Republic's military medical personnel were now treating thousands of wounded NDF troops, white civilian casualties, and wounded white Union fighters as well without differentiation. There were no non-white wounded; Wingfield's orders had been carried out and a dark skin was now a

death warrant in Portland. Stockdale's G Company had been cleaning the last of the city's Mexican gang-bangers out of a warehouse, and he had taken a 9-millimeter bullet on his Kevlar vest at close range, which had cracked a couple of ribs. He had to hold Jenny close to him very gingerly.

They stood on the roof of the City Hall which up until recently had been flying the last American flag in the Northwest. They were watching the sun rise in the cold morning air. "It's over. I can't believe it, it's over," whispered Jenny, crying softly. "All these years of fear and blood and death, and now it's over. I want to go back to Montana, Jace. I want to go home."

"You got it, babe," he said, kissing her hair. "We did it, Jen. We did it, now it's over, and we're free. Now it's time for us to begin."

Part One

After The Fire

After the fire, the ruins there did lay.
After the fire would come a brand new day.
—Ian Stuart, *After the Fire*

I

A Madhouse of Ministries

(18 days after Longview)

"Work expands to fill the time allotted for its performance."
—C. Northcote Parkinson

On a dark and rainy morning in November, Ray Ridgeway mounted the steps of the Insurance Building on the former Washington state capitol grounds in Olympia. He passed beneath the classic portico supported by eight tall and stately columns, stepped into the warm lobby of the building, and closed his sopping umbrella as if it was just another workday, rather than the first official day of business for the government of the Northwest American Republic.

Ridgeway was dressed in a conservative suit, with a tan winter coat and scarf. Besides the umbrella, he carried an expensive briefcase like the bank president he had once been. As of 16 hours ago, he was the new nation's Finance Minister. At this moment he had about 40 American dollars in his pocket; he was paying his hotel bill with NAR vouchers, which the hotel manager probably honored only out of fear. His multiple bank accounts were now frozen, by order of the banks' head offices back east, and his extensive portfolio of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds were now technically illegal. The mortgage on his home back in Portland was way in arrears, although under the circumstances he wasn't worried about any attempt at foreclosure. The Finance Minister was one of the poorest men in the new country, and yet his heart was light as a feather—as light as it had been since the day his youngest daughter had died at the hands of a nigger. Payback was

going to be a bitch, and Ray Ridgeway was going to be part and parcel of that.

It was not quite eight in the morning yet. As he entered the lobby, Ridgeway could hear the sound of someone making a speech from the state legislative building across the way. The Senate chamber's individual desks had been removed and hastily re-fitted with bleacher-like rows of seating for members of the Constitutional Convention, which was now in session to adopt a new constitution for the Northwest Republic based on a draft document that dated all the way back to 2006. Ridgeway could hear Speaker Frank Barrow's voice as he pounded his gavel on the rostrum and tried to call the Convention to order; there seemed already to be arguments breaking out on the floor. In fact, he could hear Barrow amazingly clearly, considering that the convention chamber was indoors and several hundred yards away. Then Ridgeway realized that what he was hearing was the TV someone had set up in the lobby, where he could see Barrow in living color on the rostrum via CNN. "Is CNN still in the country?" Ridgeway asked the young soldier on the reception desk, who politely stood to attention. "I thought we'd decided to throw them out?"

"I guess nobody's gotten around to it yet, sir," replied the soldier.

The scene on the television shifted to a view from a helicopter, which showed a stretch of Interstate 5 on the California-Oregon state line, or border as it was now. There were no border posts set up by either side yet, except for the old Department of Agriculture shacks on the California side that used to check motorists who might be transporting diseased produce. The weather was clear that far south, and the sun was just rising over the mountains. The interstate was as jammed with cars and trucks and SUVs as any Los Angeles freeway at rush hour. "All those white people, fleeing from the only country in the world where they and their children can be safe!" commented Ridgeway bitterly. "God, what wretched cowardice and stupidity!"

"That's the southbound lanes, sir," said the soldier, pointing to the screen. "Look at the northbound lanes. They're jammed up as well. As many white people are coming into the Republic as are leaving. They're not waiting for California to be handed over to Aztlan. That's what the beaners are howling for in Congress now. Frente de la Raza says if us

evil racists get our own country, then they should get theirs. They'll probably get it. I'd be surprised if there are any white people left in California in a week's time except for goddamned movie stars. As for all those assholes who are leaving, fuck 'em. We don't need them. They were probably Union collaborators and rats during the war anyway. By the way, how are we supposed to address you now? Mister Minister, or Mister Secretary, or Mister Ridgeway, or what?"

"I have no idea," admitted Ridgeway. "Ray will do for now."

He took the stairs up to his offices on the second floor. Finance had been allocated one corridor in the maze of offices and conference rooms; they shared the Insurance Building with the ministries of Commerce and Industry, Science and Technology, and Public Health. On the previous day, the Council of State had officially brought a dozen such bodies into existence. "That's quite a gaggle of ministries we got here, Red," John Corbett Morgan had commented after the new ministers and their deputies had been sworn in. "Is that right? Do cabinet ministries come in gaggles?"

"Right at the moment, John, I'd call them a madhouse of ministries," Council of State chairman Henry "Red" Morehouse had responded with a smile. "We've got only one man here, Foreign Minister Stanhope, who has done anything even remotely resembling this kind of job before, although Comrade Ridgeway has experience in the private sector that comes close to his Finance portfolio. This is going to be the mother of all learning curves, for all of us."

Walter Stanhope was a former American Secretary of State. He had actually been an American signatory to the Treaty negotiations held in the Lewis and Clark Hotel in Longview, after which he promptly embarrassed the hell out of the United States by defecting to the Northwest Republic. He had given away the bride Emily Pastras at her impromptu wedding to Cody Brock in one of the hotel restaurants that night, and then left Longview in the same helicopter as the NVA delegation. Stanhope raised his hand. "I'll be happy to offer any advice and assistance I can to any of you gentlemen," he said. "Foreign Affairs is going to be mostly a sinecure for a while, since no other country on earth recognizes us, including the one we just signed the Treaty with, so I doubt I'll be too busy with my own portfolio."

"As soon as possible you will each be allocated separate digs around town for your offices," Morehouse went on. "God knows, the state of Washington had enough bureaucrats who have now fled the country, or else they're hiding out, so if we want to we can give every government janitor his own corner office. Ironic, when you think about all those years when the Party could never afford a single stand-alone building and had to operate out of fleabag apartments and mobile homes. But the security situation is still a bit fluid, and we want to keep everybody together here on the capitol grounds for a while until things settle down." Ridgeway was aware of that; the previous night in his hotel room, he had heard the sputter of rifle and automatic weapons fire, and the boom of the occasional grenade. Not all of Olympia's former American masters were reconciled to the treaty, and the NDF was still flushing out and putting down the last of the dark-skinned minorities as well, the final holdouts who for some reason defying rational analysis still hadn't gotten the message yet. The Jews had fled the city months ago.

When Ray Ridgeway reached the second floor, he saw that a large brown cardboard sign, evidently cut from a box, had been taped to one wall at the beginning of the appropriate corridor. It displayed an acrylic blue, white and green Northwest Tricolor flag torn from a pre-revolutionary Party sticker, beneath which was inked in black Sharpie, *Ministry of Finance and the Treasury.* Ridgeway had commandeered a suite of offices that had once belonged to the state insurance commissioner. He walked in and found the outer office crowded with people. "Everybody here early?" he said after his new staff wished him good morning. "That's an encouraging sign."

"Actually, most of us are sleeping on cots over in the Rotunda or in the governor's mansion," said former Northwest Volunteer Martin Dewitt, a middle-aged man who had drawn the job of Deputy Finance Minister because he had been a CPA under the old régime. "They were talking about moving the whole show to Fort Lewis and bunking the government down in the barracks there, but the NDF is still securing the base, and there's still booby-traps ZOG left behind. The Divisional Quartermaster wants to start confiscating some buildings to accommodate government personnel, but he hasn't been given a

list yet of what's up for grabs. That's if we decide to make Olympia the capital, which is another thing they're arguing about across the way there." Dewitt jerked his head in the direction of the legislative building. "There are factions demanding that we choose Spokane or Coeur d'Alene or Boise. We're still getting the old anybody-who-lives-west-of-the-Cascades-is-a-sissy thing, if you can believe that. I don't think white people are ever really happy unless they have something really dumb to fight each other about."

"Oh, you haven't seen anything yet," said Ridgeway with a sigh. "The religious knives haven't really come out so far. Anyway, Red and Frank tell me that Olympia is it for the foreseeable future, in the sense that the State President, when we have one, will reside over in the old Governor's Mansion, across the way there. The Republic will want to decentralize as much as possible, though, so when they send the bombers they can't wipe us all out in one fell swoop. Same goes for industry and all other vital services. Everything needs to be spread out as much as possible. No idea where we'll end up, but that's one of many bridges we'll have to cross when we come to it. As far as accommodation goes, I'd like all our Ministry staff who don't have their own homes in the city to go to at night to come with me over to the Red Lion. They've got plenty of room over there, and enough employees stuck around so the restaurant is still open. That way we can keep on brainstorming and working after office hours, which is the way we're going to be rolling for a long time. We have a whole new nation to build, and somehow we're going to have to pay for it all. That's our department. I'll arrange with the NDF to have military transport of some kind for us to get in to work in the mornings, and back to the Red Lion at night. Hopefully a proper bus and not a truck, although these days we pretty much have to take what we can get."

"Is the bar gonna be open late?" called one of the men. "We're all waiting for the witching hour tonight."

"Yes, that's right, isn't it?" replied Ridgeway wryly. "General Order Number Ten for NVA personnel, or I guess ex-NVA personnel as we are now, is officially rescinded at midnight tonight, and we can break the long dry spell. Those of you who haven't already been doing so for the past few weeks, that is. Me, I will probably be asleep. I expect

every one of you to be in here tomorrow morning at eight sharp, sitting behind whatever desks you have managed to glom onto, and ready to go to work. If you're hung over and puking in the wastebaskets, that's your look-out. Just make sure you're working while you puke. Now could we move into the conference room?"

The former insurance commissioners of the state of Washington had been sufficiently senior bureaucrats to rate a good deal of luxury. The floors of the offices were plushly carpeted and the conference room held a long mahogany table. "Sorry about the crowding," said Ridgeway. "Looks like we're short on chairs. In keeping with our new policy in the Republic of returning to the old gentlemanly ways, I would like to ask all of our ladies to sit down while the men stand, including myself."

After they all were seated or leaning against the walls, Ridgeway took a look at them down the table. The new government department consisted of 32 people plus himself, about evenly split between male and female. This contrasted sharply with their opponents, the hundreds of thousands of federal employees who worked for the United States Treasury, the Federal Reserve, the Comptroller of the Currency, the New York Stock Exchange, the U.S. Mint, the Office of Budget and Management, and all of the other innumerable bureaucratic organs who dealt with the finances and economy of the United States.

Ridgeway smiled, and spoke. "Good morning, comrades, and welcome to the first day of the rest of your lives. For those of you who don't know me, I am Raymond Ridgeway, former president of Cascade Bank, Oregon National Bank, the Portland Municipal Credit Union and a whole bunch of other stuff that doesn't make any difference now. I was a Volunteer for the last couple of years of what I suppose may now be referred to as the War of Independence, reporting directly to the Army Council, and part of my job was designing a plan of operation for this very day, so that the Republic would hit the ground running and we wouldn't end up floundering around in a sea of red ink and economic confusion that would stifle us before we even had a chance. Every one of you are here because, like me, you have some experience in the old private financial sector. All of you have spent most of your working lives handling and moving other people's money. Now you are going to have a chance to do the same for an entire nation. First

question: how many of you here are *not* NVA, or were not in some other way associated with the Northwest independence movement?" Half a dozen men and women hesitantly raised their hands. "I would like to extend an especially grateful welcome to you new comrades and co-workers," Ridgeway told them. "I will not ask you about your motivations for staying when so many people in the Northwest are running away, but I will tell you that you have made the right choice, for yourselves and for your descendants. The Northwest Republic is going to depend on the effort and the services of those normal everyday white men and women who have made the difficult and soul-searching decision to remain at their posts, and to continue with their lives here in a new order of society."

Ridgeway paused, and then continued. "Now let me describe for you in general terms the strategic task that lies before us in the long run. For the first few months, hell, the first few years, we are going to be working closely in harness with the Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to make sure that just as the United States could not defeat us with weapons and murder and prison, they will not be able to defeat us with their almighty dollar.

"Our three ministries will be kind of like a Trouble Trio in the old NVA. We will build our assets and resources, and we will take on and defeat every economic and monetary obstacle and challenge, every attempt the United States and the rest of the world makes to try and strangle our new nation in the cradle through dearth and economic hardship. The old régime is already threatening to impose crushing economic sanctions on the NAR. As Senator Gerald Gershon put it on Fox News yesterday, they intend to send us back to the age of the horse and buggy, and then starve the horse to death. They will not succeed. Our long-term strategic goal must be to create a completely self-contained economy here in the Northwest, completely independent of the rest of the world, almost like we were on another planet. Anything we have to import from outside, anything that we cannot produce or grow or manufacture ourselves, will be a knife held at our throat by ZOG until we find some way to remove it. All this globalization crap that has caused so much misery in the world for so long is going to end, here. The Northwest Republic must grow everything we eat, and

make everything we use. That is a very tall order, but we are going to fill it, and we will do so with such skill and brilliance and panache that we will take the world's breath away. We are going to demonstrate for good and all, that white people are indeed better people."

* * *

Late that afternoon the new Cabinet met in the old governor's conference room in the capitol building. Eight out of the 12 ministers were present. All of them were wearing NDF uniforms, except for Ray Ridgeway, Walter Stanhope, and Fiona Bonnar, a registered nurse who had been made Minister of Public Health. As befitted a revolutionary régime, the new government was still largely military. Three of the absentees were with the army in various places around the Northwest, and the fourth, General Frank Barrow, who now held the State Security portfolio, was out in the old Senate chamber attempting to ride herd on the squabbling delegates and factions of the Constitutional Convention.

The Convention had rendered the old capitol building perpetually chaotic, day in and day out, with a constant ebb and flow of people and news media wandering through the Rotunda, in and out of the Convention Hall and the committee and meeting rooms. There were dozens of individual committees of the Convention gathered in various offices, conference rooms, and cubbyholes all around the building, discussing and drawing up reports on everything from the adoption of the metric system (maybe) to soybean production to legally defining homosexuality as a mental illness. The marble-floored Rotunda was littered with cots where delegates and NDF soldiers were sleeping at night, as well as all kinds of detritus from empty Styrofoam coffee cups and pizza boxes to rifles and ammunition leaning in the corners.

Above all, in every corner there were overflowing receptacles ranging from metal wastebaskets to a Waterford crystal punchbowl from the old governor's banquet service that had been commandeered as public ashtrays. One of the first acts of the Convention had been to repeal all anti-smoking laws in the Northwest that under the United States had demonized tobacco users and turned them into a viciously

persecuted minority. "Smoking is a filthy and unhealthy habit, no doubt about that," Barrow had proclaimed from the rostrum. "You gotta be a real idiot to do it, no argument, comrades. But under ZOG it has also become a statement of political resistance against the liberal régime. Who knows how many men and women would never have joined the NVA if the old order had not added insult to injury, flexing their petty power over the lives of others by perpetually driving them out into the cold and the rain simply to light up? For how many of us did that not become the final straw in our own minds? *Fuck second-hand smoke!*" This brief speech had received the longest standing ovation yet from the assembled delegates, and the Convention was proceeding in a haze of tobacco fumes. The traditional smoke-filled back rooms of political deal-making in the new Republic were truly smoke-filled.

There were 14 chairs arranged around the long polished mahogany table in the conference room. In the former governor's chair sat Council of State chairman Henry Morehouse, a spare and mild-looking middle-aged man whom one media personality who interviewed him once described as "an evil Mr. Rogers." The meeting was about to begin without him when Barrow came in, a tall man in his forties with ash-blond hair and a weathered face. "Hey, Frank, glad you could make it," called Morehouse. "How's it going out there?"

"It's a three-ringed circus, and I feel like a lion tamer whose cats have escaped and are running around in the audience," said Barrow, taking his seat. "Look, Red, I can't ride herd on that dog and pony show out there and handle State Security at the same time. You need to relieve me of one or the other, or at least give me some help. I went into it with nothing but a small copy of Roberts' Rules of Order I found in the old lieutenant governor's desk drawer."

"I gave you State Security because of your police and NVA background, and the chairmanship of the Convention because of your brilliant handling of the Longview conference," said Morehouse.

"Brilliant, my ass! All I did was just shove a single sheet of paper under their noses every day for ten weeks and demand they sign it," said Barrow with a scowl.

"Which they eventually signed," pointed out Morehouse.

"Beyond that, my so-called brilliant handling consisted of saying no all the time to everything those assholes threw at us to try and divert us from a sovereign nation. No offense, Walter."

"None taken," said Stanhope. "They *were* assholes. You should have seen and heard them behind closed doors. They finished any doubts I ever had about coming over in public. I swear to God, if I had to listen to Howard Weintraub try to talk us into arresting or killing the NVA delegation by surprise one more time, or hear that ghastly Galinsky woman weep about how we were betraying the Six Million of the Holocaust by even speaking to you, I would have flipped out and started clubbing them with a chair."

"Red, no kidding, can I at least get somebody to alternate with me on this Speaker of the Convention gig?" pleaded Barrow. "There's Security stuff I *have* to get onto. I've got a secret police to create. Weintraub is hollering all over the media back in the States that we're a fascist tyranny. How can we be a fascist tyranny with no secret police, while I sit here fooling around with all this democracy and Constitution crap? What kind of wicked evil right-wing fascist racist Nazi tyrants are we?" There were general chuckles all around the table.

"I would be honored to take the rostrum for tomorrow's session, Frank, and any other time you need me to spell you," offered Stanhope. "The Russians are still being coy about recognizing the Republic officially, although they want to go in with us on some kind of worldwide paper and pulp monopoly. Other than them, nobody else is even speaking to us. I'm very much at a loose end."

"Hallelujah! Praise his name!" shouted Barrow.

"Let me guess, You just came from the Holy Rollers' caucus," said Bart DeMarco, the Minister of Transport.

"What's the latest from the floor?" asked Morehouse.

"We've adjourned for the day, although there will be committee meetings and bullshit sessions and little intriguing conspiracies going on in little corners until the wee hours, like there are every night," he told them.

"What's the scoreboard looking like, Frank?" asked General John Corbett Morgan, a large black-bearded Kentucky mountain man who had commanded a Flying Column in the Olympic Peninsula during the

revolt, before leading the First Army's assault over the I-205 bridge into Portland. He was now Minister of Defense. "Have the tub-thumpers from Fifth Monarchy and the Sanctified Church of Hootin' Holler got us all wearing Pilgrim hats yet?"

"Actually, so far the extreme Christians aren't the problem, at least not as much as we were afraid they'd be," replied Barrow. "It's the shithouse libertarians, the bearded dudes from the little cabins in the backwoods who don't want any laws or government at all. Which would be great, if it were possible. Hell, I think in a lot of ways it would be just the ticket to say never mind the 1950s, let's go all the way back to the 1850s. Trouble is, that isn't really on the table so long as we've still got ZOG sitting over there in D.C. and Jew York sharpening their daggers for us. You can't fight off a nuclear threat with hand-loads from a log cabin out in the Sawtooth Range."

"They'll be happy once they understand the Federal Reserve and the Trilateral Commission are no longer in the saddle," said DeMarco. "Until we ask them to pay taxes, of course."

"Otherwise, despite a lot of squabbling over details and the hundred and one personal hobby horses everybody's riding, which mostly involve banning something somebody else wants to do, the delegates are following the 2006 draft pretty closely so far," Barrow went on approvingly. "I was amazed that they were able to wrap their minds so easily around the concept of an institutionalized parliamentary Opposition, the whole point of which is to pick holes in everything the government does. Our version of the two-party system. One speaker out there called the Opposition the people's defense attorneys, and although we won't have actual attorneys in the Republic, I think that pretty much nails it."

"Any major surprises so far?" asked Morehouse.

"Nothing we hadn't always anticipated," Barrow told them. "Some guy from Idaho put in a motion that we change the name of the legislature from the National Convention, like it is in the draft, to Parliament, and that seems to have some support among the various cliques. More dignified and all. Parliament is fine with me, if that's what they want, but personally I think it's just some mule-headed paleocons

and ego monkeys who want to change anything the Old Man wrote just on general principles."

"The Old Man didn't write the draft Constitution," protested Fiona Bonnar from Public Health. "Not all of it, anyway. It was a group effort, including a lot of input from the imprisoned Order men and David Lane himself! That's bordering on blasphemy!"

"Just what we need! Another religious problem!" chortled Gary Bresler from Commerce and Industry.

"I don't believe the Old Man or the Order guys or anyone involved in the 2006 draft intended it as holy scripture, comrade," Morehouse admonished her gently. "They always made it clear, it was only a draft. It contains suggestions based on lifetimes of observation of how the old system went wrong. But the final version was always something to be determined by that very mob out there now, whom so many have suffered and died to bring together into that room, so they could decide what they wanted to keep and how they want to live."

Barrow nodded. "There are a few who still want to go back to the old conservative ways *sans* niggers, complete with Fourth of July picnics and the Brady Bunch, but they won't carry the day," he told the Cabinet. "Time moves forward and not backward. We can't turn back the clock to 1950, or 1861, or 1776, and the majority of them understand that."

"So how go the religious wars?" asked Morehouse wearily. "I remember that little speech you gave us before you guys headed out for Longview, Frank, to the effect of yes, I know, but not now. [See *A Mighty Fortress*.] Trouble is, this is it. The time has come. We're not going to be able to put it off any more."

"I notice the government has found something for Bob Gair and Reverend McCausland to do elsewhere," remarked Morgan. "I thought they were going to pull down on each other on that last day at Longview, over what music to play when the Tricolor flag went up."

"Don't I remember?" said Barrow with a wan smile. "Good thing Cathy Frost stepped in and gave us our National Anthem, then. No major uproar yet, largely because nobody has asked for anything that anybody else absolutely refuses to concede. Some Asatru and Wiccan types want the right to designate certain groves and places on ley

lines as sacred or spiritual sites, and that went over without too much hurly-burly, although most people don't know what ley lines are and no specific locations have been mentioned. When we'll have trouble is when the Odinists want to designate a sacred grove on the same street as the local Pentecostal church. You already know that we got the Christians to quit yelping about the swastika on the NDF eagle by giving them *A Mighty Fortress* as the national anthem. That's fine by everybody, because it's a hell of a song. I think if we'd played Great Big Gobs of Greasy, Grimy Gopher Guts at that moment, those of us who were there would make it our national anthem.

"Right now the various religious types are hollering about teaching evolution and paleontology in the schools," he continued. "If they really keep on pushing it, we may end up with a school system segregated on religious lines, which as far as I'm concerned is a non-starter, but we'll see what kind of report the Education Committee comes up with. I personally think we could make do by giving parents a choice of tracks within the system. Fundamentalist parents who don't want their kids learning evolution or other scientific stuff that contradicts the Bible go to Biology A and study butterflies and dissect frogs, which I think is scripturally safe, and those who want their kids to learn actual science go to Biology B and get the whole nine yards."

"We can live with that," said Morehouse. "The problem is they don't just want their kids not being taught Darwin. The hidden agenda is that they want to make sure nobody *else's* kids get taught Darwin, either. They want some kind of endorsement from the state saying that their religion is really the right one, and we're just kindly tolerating all those eccentrics who believe otherwise, and that they can't have. That has always been the problem with Christians. They're mostly good people as individuals, but they cannot and must not ever be trusted with state power in this country, because they *always* end up trying to impose their own religious beliefs and practices on others."

Barrow went on, "They also want Christmas but no Halloween in the schools, and they want religion classes, which in theory I don't object to, but the trouble will come when pagans, Wiccans, agnostics, and just plain anti-Christian fanatics demand equal time."

"Have classes in all Aryan religions and religious history and let the parents choose which ones they want their children to go to," suggested Bresler. "Simple and fair."

"The trouble is, simple and fair has never had much to do with religion, and we have two thousand years of history to prove it," said Morehouse wearily. "I suppose the antis are screaming at the top of their lungs against the teaching of Christianity of any kind?"

"Like banshees," confirmed Barrow.

"Jesus is a dead Jew on a stick, and all that crap?"

"But of course." Barrow shrugged. "We've always had that problem. A minority of the people in the Movement have been in it, not to free our people or to implement the 14 Words, but because of a sheer hatred of Christianity that approaches the level of insanity. I think it's because when they were little, their parents wouldn't let them watch TV or play video games on Sunday mornings, but made them dress up in scratchy clothes and hard shoes, and go to church where they were bored out of their minds, and scolded by old ladies for farting in Bible class. Hell, I don't know what goes on in the minds of some of these people who never seem to get that *race* is what is important. I mean, Jesus Christ on a raft! Pardon the term, but it's not as if we all won't find out for ourselves one day what's on the other side of life."

"How bad is it likely to get?" asked Joe Jennings, Minister of Science and Technology. "We're going to need scientists in the Republic who studied something besides the book of Genesis."

"I'll make sure it doesn't completely sidetrack the whole Convention, if I have to call in some of the boys and go upside some people's heads in a back room," said Barrow. "But this is an ulcer in our body politic, and it's going to be with us for a long time. We're going to have to find a *modus vivendi* to deal with it. Speaking of religion, Red, I had a brief talk this morning with a priest named Father McEwan or McIan or something. He's a Tridentine Catholic. You know, the old pre-Vatican II Catholics who still hold the mass in Latin? He made an interesting suggestion. Suppose we recognize the Tridentines as the official Northwest branch of Catholicism, and hand over the churches and cathedrals to them? He figures that will put us on the good side of millions of the more traditional Catholics, almost all of whom are

white, and also give us an excuse to boot out these damned left-wing priests and nuns who have been causing so much trouble over the past century everywhere they go, liberation theology and all that crap. Plus, it looks like the next pope in Rome is going to be a nigger, some archbishop from Nigeria. If we can set up a traditional white Pope here in the Northwest, that will be a big draw for contacts and resources."

"An intriguing possibility," admitted Morehouse. "Does this Father McWhosis understand that the old religious exemptions are out the window, and they will have to pay any property taxes we decide on non-homestead property for their churches? Also, does he understand that under the Northwest Constitution professional clergy of any kind will be prohibited, and they're all going to have to get day jobs?"

"He does, and he had a suggestion on that," Barrow replied. "These Tridentine priests are some of the most educated white men left in the world, as far as the old classical learning goes. Why not let them teach history and Latin and whatnot in the schools?"

"Bloody hell, then not to mention the anti-Christians turning flips, you'll be having all the Prods frothing at the mouth about letting in the Whore of Babylon," spoke up Patrick Brennan, the Minister of Race and Resettlement. "I was hoping to leave all that shite behind in Belfast."

"We will," promised Morehouse. "Maybe we can let these Tridentine priests pick up a paycheck by teaching at university level and not in the public schools. Frank, when you see this priest again, ask him to submit some kind of official memorandum or position paper in writing from whatever his organization is. It's got political and cultural potential, if we can find some way to work it without getting all the Holy Rollers bellyaching. Plus, we owe that poor bastard Mel Gibson a favor, I think. This will come under Culture and Education, but Stepanov is still up in Seattle and Macready is out east shooting up Spokane, last I heard. We'll lay it on them when they get back. Please continue, Frank."

Barrow gulped down coffee from a paper Starbucks cup someone had handed him. "The main debates now are centering on just how much authority the central government is going to have, and how that authority will be organized. There are still those who are concerned that us big bad Nazis are going to set up some kind of tyranny where

the Bureau of State Security tells everybody what color socks they can put on in the morning."

"That's not even close to what Hitler did in Germany!" protested James Salvatore, the new Minister of the Interior.

"You know that and I know that, Jim, but an amazing number of people even from the NVA itself have no idea what the real story on Hitler and National Socialism is," said Barrow. "You can't erase generations of lies and disinformation from people's minds overnight. But it's actually got more serious overtones than that. A lot of people don't like the idea of a national police force. They want to elect a sheriff who then appoints his own deputies like during the frontier days."

"Which opens the door for all kinds of local cliques and corruption, just like in the frontier days," said Arthur Flowers, the Minister of Justice. "We can't have a situation arise where local law enforcement are basically just the head-knockers for the community's wealthy élite. The police have to serve *all* of the people, and not just the local city council or county commissioners or the local real estate developer or whoever's signing their paycheck. They also have to serve the interests of the state and society as a whole, not just purely parochial concerns in their own little town or bailiwick."

"We will also need a national paramilitary police force as a coordinated line of defense in case of an American invasion." said Morehouse. "Don't worry about it, Frank. People accepted state police under the old régime and they'll get used to the Civil Guard. Besides, we're going to have an armed society, remember? That's the greatest counterbalance to any attempt to impose a tyranny on any level."

"Assuming the people have the guts to turn their guns on authority figures," said John Morgan sourly. "We had the Second Amendment in the U.S., and yet for generations all those guns just sat in the closets of so-called patriots gathering dust."

"But there has to be a civilian authority and an independent judiciary," argued Barrow. "People still cling to this idea that election is somehow better than appointment, despite the entire experience of this continent since Andrew Jackson's time, which proves that electing government officials is about the worst way to go, since it leads to a

class of professional politicians who are just as bad as any British royal governor ever thought of being."

"That's what happens when you give the vote to every retard and syphilitic nigger drug addict, yes," argued Bresler. "But the purpose of qualified and earned citizenship and franchise within the Northwest Constitution is to make sure that you have as responsible and educated an electorate as possible, so you *don't* have fools voting other fools and thieves and snake oil salesmen into office."

Morgan spoke up. "Folks will accept a more or less imposed national police force so long as it's genuinely *their* police force, there to protect and serve, as the old saying used to go, but they want that feel-good factor of going into the little booth and pulling the lever about something, too. It don't mean nothing, hell, it ain't meant nothing in the past hunnert years if the only people on that ballot was thieves and liars and con men and it cost ten million dollars to run a campaign, but folks *want* it. They're used to it. It's like a kid with his security blanket. They gone get twitchy over appointed judges and sheriffs. Or will there be any sheriffs?"

"What about this?" suggested Morehouse. "The basic unit of administration in the Republic will still be the county, right?"

"Yes," agreed Barrow. "We decided to keep those because they're what people are used to, and there's existing infrastructure we can step in and take over. We'll probably have to combine some of the counties out east, because they're so thinly populated."

Morehouse nodded. "Mmm hmm. Suppose we have one elected sheriff for each county, who will be the Republic's chief representative and administrative officer, as he actually was in medieval England when the office was first created all those centuries ago? The sheriff will handle things like revenue collection and administration of state property, so forth and so on. He will be the top civilian officer in each county, and we have to trust those who have earned the vote through fulfilling their responsibilities to elect good ones. In a non-capitalist system that will almost certainly be subject to severe economic sanctions, there won't be all that much bribery and corruption money floating around, anyway. It's not like there will be an Indian casino every twenty miles, like there was under the old order."

"Kinda hard to do with no Indians," agreed Flowers. "What about the judiciary? That will come under my department."

"Same deal applies, Art," said Morehouse. "Let the citizens' roll elect a senior judge and assistant judges in a population-apportioned number for each county."

"Will these judges be paid by the state?" put in Gary Bresler.

"Doesn't that violate the Constitutional prohibition against a legal profession, anybody making a living off the law?"

"The Constitution prohibits *attorneys,*" said Barrow thoughtfully, rubbing his chin. "Or rather it prohibits anyone accepting payment in money or anything of value for serving as an advocate in a legal case. People charged with crimes can still appoint someone else to defend and speak for them, those advocates just can't be paid. It will be considered to be a civic duty, like it was in ancient Rome, where some of the most famous statesmen and philosophers started off as advocates in the law courts. We all know what that provision was meant to prevent. Under the old order, lawyers were an unmitigated horror. The entire court system was essentially nothing more than a gigantic fraud to allow millions of parasites in expensive suits and briefcases to live large off the fruits of human misery. It was a machine that pulled people into it as the raw material to be processed and mangled and crushed like grapes in a wine press, drained of every last penny. We cannot and will not allow that here, not ever. But we do need some kind of court system, although the intention of the 2006 drafters was clearly that it should be as bare minimum as possible."

Morehouse nodded. "Obviously King County and Multnomah County will need more judges than Adams or Pend Oreille County," he said. "Or whatever we decide to rename Multnomah County when that committee on getting rid of all these goddamned Indian names reports back. But they will have no actual armed men at their command to strong-arm and intimidate people. A magistrate's authority needs to be legal and moral, based not just on respect for his office, but for the man. No one can demand or receive respect when the whole state and society that empowers him is oppressive and corrupt from top to bottom. The Republic's judges and the courts are there to try cases and make determinations of *fact,* not to make law all off their own bat

and according to their own whims, or according to their own liberal politics as was the case under the U.S.A. Law is made by the National Convention, or Parliament or whatever we decide to call the legislative branch. Judges in the Republic can't just order people to do this and that, like in America. Any and all enforcement requires the concurrence of the state in the form of the Guard. One of the worst aspects of the old system was finding yourself in a courtroom surrounded by enemies and being afraid to speak the truth even when truth was on your side, because the judge had armed men at his beck and call and the power to lock people up for so-called contempt of court, the judge himself of course defining what constituted contempt. It allowed weak and sneaking little men in black robes to exercise power and authority which they neither earned nor deserved. Our judges have to command respect and obedience through wisdom and justice, not institutional terrorism."

Art Flowers spoke up. "Again, we need to bear in mind that the electorate will be composed only of citizens who have already demonstrated civic responsibility in order to earn their vote, I think that will alleviate a lot of the corruption and cronyism and bribery and general sleaze that flourished under democracy. Hope so, anyway."

"That and the fact that we're not going to have that much money to go around bribing cops and officials," put in Ray Ridgeway. "When you don't live in one big fleshpot and shopping mall, with all kinds of artificial desires and commercially created consumer greed, the motivations for corruption are correspondingly diminished."

"Less temptation, less corruption," said Fiona Bonnar.

"But we need to leave the Civil Guard a separate body, independent of local government," Flowers continued. "Part of the Guard's function will be to assist civil authority, i.e. the sheriff and the judiciary, but the Guard can't actually be under the command of local officials. That's where your skullduggery starts seeping into the system."

"So what else are they debating out there?" asked Morehouse.

"People are also confused about the very idea of abolishing the states altogether," said Barrow. "Some of them want to know why we can't have a state and a federal government just like before. I've tried to explain that in a country the size of the Republic it's not necessary

to have any middle level of government, as well as being incredibly expensive and wasteful."

Salvatore laughed and shook his head. "Many of these people joined the revolt over the crushing taxes that paid for war after war in the Middle East, not to mention giving every nigger and beaner in America his own mortgage which he then defaulted on, not to mention the attempt to create a national health care system that gave blacks and browns free care while whites paid for it, hell, you guys remember how it was. Do they really want to pay taxes now to support an extra tier of bureaucracy that was created in the days of horse and wagon and the steam locomotive? Something we don't really need anymore in the twenty-first century of instantaneous communication and rapid mass transit?"

"People are going to want a lot of things just like before," said Morehouse. "They naturally long for the familiar. There's still an awful lot of white people out there who honestly believe it's possible to restore the old American Dream, just without all the niggers and the bullshit. They don't understand that the Iron Dream is what we have to shoot for, to make sure we have any future at all."

"It's hard for them to internalize new concepts," agreed Salvatore. "I think decentralization can help reassure them. If we can disperse as much state infrastructure as we can to places like Spokane and Boise and Missoula and Cheyenne, so forth and so on, it will not only serve government and defense policy and spread the jobs and wealth around, but it will keep the population reassured. I think a lot of the people east of the Cascades are afraid their voices and their interests will be drowned out by the big cities along the I-5 corridor, like happened under ZOG. We don't want to give them the impression that they've exchanged one big bureaucratic regime on the east coast for one on the west coast."

"Any more serious problems?" asked Morehouse.

"We're getting some static on the concept of national service for young people," said Barrow.

"Absolutely essential!" said Bresler from Commerce and Industry.

"What's the beef?" asked Morehouse.

"So far the proposed requirement is one year in the Labor Service and two years in the military for boys, two years Labor Service for girls. We have some people who want to put in loopholes for the draft, kind of like what used to exist under the U.S.A., college exemptions and so forth. Not only for military conscription itself, but for the Labor Service. Especially for the Labor Service. I hate to say it, but I think we've actually had some damned lobbyists creep in already, people putting certain delegates up to things, including trying to make sure there's some way little mall rat Richie Rich Junior doesn't have to spend a year out of high school hauling garbage or swinging a pick and shovel."

"That's a big-ass negatory," said Morgan flatly. "We allow that, we're opening the door to a goddamned class system in the Republic with the Party and the rich on the top, like in the Soviet Union. That will be a weakness ZOG will exploit to destroy us someday. One of the biggest problems we had under the old order was all these pale Beavis and Buttheads who got to the age of thirty without ever having to work a single day in their lives."

"I'm in full agreement," said Morehouse. "Hang tough on national service Frank, and let everybody know the government is backing you up on this. Every young person works in the Labor Service and the men serve in the army first. *Then* they go on to college and the rest of their lives. And every man in this country is going to have to be a soldier, at least part time. Our enemies in the United States and Aztlan will always outnumber us."

"Next bone of contention is whether or not girls will be able to choose military service in lieu of the Labor Service, and for how long?" reported Barrow. "A lot of Christians and general Neanderthal male chauvinist types want to go back to an all-male army."

"Choose the military as a career? Of course," said Morehouse. "Our female comrades who fought in the NVA have earned them that right. I'm thinking of Cathy Frost and Melanie Young. I'm thinking of that little Threesec girl of seventeen who climbed up on top of that I-5 bridge and called down our artillery a few days ago. In the face of examples like that, we're supposed to tell our women they have to

stay home and bake cookies and knit sweaters for the boys in uniform? Horse shit."

"As a *substitute* for the Labor Service, no," said Stanhope emphatically. "Red nailed it. The main thing about the Labor Service has to be that *everybody's* kid serves, rich and poor, male and female alike. Their years of national service through work and the military have to become simply a part of a young man or woman's coming of age in the Northwest Republic, something *everybody* does without question. Nobody phones it in, nobody gets a pass, like they got a pass on responsibility in America. I'm with John on this. You start giving certain kids exemptions or diddling around with their conditions, especially if they are the children of Party people, and you have the beginnings of a privileged élite, which is the slippery slope that eventually created ZOG. I myself grew up in that kind of élite, fancy prep school, Skull and Bones, where none of us rich punks would have been caught dead with a shovel in our hand or wearing a uniform, and I can tell you first-hand what kind of person it produces. Not the kind we want in our Republic. That's one of the reasons Marxist Communism never worked well in practice. The Communist Party bureaucracy, the *nomenklatura*, became the Soviet Union's new nobility, and we can't allow that to happen here."

Bresler spoke up. "Not only is it vitally important that all young men and women go through that experience with one another, but frankly, the Republic is going to need their labor. We don't have Mexicans any more to dig our ditches and haul our garbage. There's a lot of work to be done out there. Rebuilding Portland alone is going to be a nightmare."

"Tell me about it," agreed Ray Ridgeway glumly. "I have to find the money to pay for it."

Barrow said, "Some of the delegates are proposing a maternity exemption from national service for girls in the name of eugenics, but some others, mostly the more strait-laced Christian types, are complaining that this will encourage teenaged pregnancy."

"Good!" said Morehouse. "We *want* to encourage teenaged marriage and pregnancy, since the overriding national imperative has to be that *there must be more of us*. Right now white people under the age of sixty are only eight per cent of the planet's population, and white women

of childbearing age are less than three percent. We *have* to get those numbers up!"

"But won't that lead to a situation where girls are encouraged to get pregnant to get out of Labor Service?" asked Fiona Bonnar.

"If bringing new white lives into the world isn't one of the highest forms of national service, I don't know what is," commented Jennings.

"Pregnant girls can still do office work or assemble widgets on an assembly line or something," said Flowers.

"Again, let's wait and see what the relevant committee of the Convention comes up with," said Morehouse.

Jennings spoke again. "By the way, before I forget, at some point soon I need to get with all of you about your use of computers and internet connection in your departments. As incredible as it may sound to someone raised on the information highway, I think we're going to need to learn to do without the internet for a while. The government will have to, anyway. It's essential that the NAR take precautions against virus attacks originating in the United States and Israel, some of which have already been reported. With or without official sanction, someone is already trying to shut us down. A lot of private sector networks have already been infected and in some cases crashed. Yes, I know, we have some real hotshot computer geeks from the NVA who can work up all kinds of firewalls and whatnot, but right now if we rely on computer networks for vital functions, in our present shaky state of newborn existence, a major system crash in Defense or Security or Commerce and Industry could be very serious. My personal recommendation is that we don't rely on any kind of computer system with any connection to the internet, and we probably need to be leery of using local area networks in our offices as well, even without an internet connection. Some damned spy might sneak in with a thumb drive in his pocket containing a virus, and load it onto one of our government machines and infect and destroy vital data. This probably means going back to filing cabinets and typewriters for most of our government offices, or at least stand-alone word processors and PCs. I'm sure if we dig around in the basements and back rooms in a former state capitol, the home of bureaucracy, we can find some of that stuff gathering dust."

"To be honest, I wouldn't be sorry to see that happen in any case," said Morehouse. "All of you know that I have always considered the internet to be a mixed blessing at best. Right, Ray, you're up next. What have we got in our national wallet?"

"A fair amount, or we will have," said Ridgeway. "When the top nine American megabanks froze their Northwest customers' assets, they not only pissed off their millions of depositors, they opened the door for us to nationalize the banks. Which we would have done anyway, but now we have an excellent fig leaf to cover that decision. I've taken the liberty of declaring the assets of all private financial institutions to be state property, which we will hold in trusteeship for the depositors to prevent any attempts to move the cash out of the country. Acting on my authority, guards are being posted on most of the branches to make sure there's no funny stuff, no attempt to remove cash reserves and make off with them, so forth and so on. By the way, thanks for the manpower on that, Art."

"Technically speaking, as of yesterday all police officers in the Northwest who have remained at their posts are now members of the Civil Guard, but it's been an interesting exercise for me to see how many of them will obey orders coming from the Ministry of Justice," said Flowers. "About eighty percent seem to be complying, especially since it involves preventing bank robbery, which is in fact what cops are supposed to do, aren't they?"

"Most banks have at least a skeleton staff remaining and they're still open, although with limited hours, and most ATM machines are still working," Ridgeway went on. "There have been some runs on some of these institutions, those that haven't been frozen by their own home offices, but that seems to be leveling off now that the Cabinet has issued our assurance that everybody's money is still theirs, and we're not going to confiscate it all. One of the many rumors the American media is planting. I think that one comes from our old buddy Howard Weintraub."

"Doesn't that make it easy for all these rats who are fleeing the Republic to take their money with them?" asked Morgan.

"Well, it *is* their money, after all," Ridgeway reminded him. "Yes, I know, it's a terrible hemorrhage of funds, but it would be infinitely

worse if we just shut down the banks and didn't let anybody take their money out. The whole economy would grind to a halt, not to mention we'd probably face riots in the streets."

"How long do you think it will take for us to get a new currency into circulation, once we decide what it will be, marks or pounds or kwatloos or whatever?" asked Morehouse. "I don't like the idea of using dollars. Dollars have too much connection with the old order."

"My recommendation is that we hold off for at least a year on that, and for the time being allow Federal Reserve notes to be the official legal tender," said Ridgeway. "That may lead to a money shortage, but paradoxically that will help us as we ease into the substitution of the Republic's own legal tender. We don't want to rush into this, because there are still a lot of variables. For example, we don't know how much gold and silver we're going to have in reserve. We have to base our currency on something, at least until we can put together an economy based on Hjalmar Schacht's productivity-based system, which is the way we need to go, not just print it at the touch of a computer function key like the Federal Reserve. Hell, maybe even platinum if we can get hold of enough of it.

"A lot of that will depend on what we can seize from the enemy's abandoned assets, Jewish and non-white property. Depending on how fast they bugged out, there is a whole treasure trove of real estate, bank accounts, safe deposit boxes, and goodies they're leaving behind, anything they couldn't carry with them in their rush to get the hell out of Dodge. Once we get a new currency accepted and designed, and we acquire the technical capacity and the special paper to print it, I recommend a period of transition of at least six months after that before the changeover is complete and the U.S. dollar officially becomes foreign exchange. Who's that character heading the Convention's currency committee?"

"A guy named Brian Mackintosh, NVA man from Corvallis," Barrow told him. "Fought with Billy Basquine's Column. He's a coin collector and very big on silver and gold. I know he wants a new coinage using actual precious metals, with only a minimal amount of paper money."

"Good idea in theory, but like I said, first we have to get hold of the gold and silver to coin with," said Ridgeway. "If he's a coin man, there are all kinds of places that have loads of precious metals to mint collector coins, and since most of them are run by people who have at least some degree of sympathy for the Republic, I would think some could be encouraged to move their operations here. We will need their expertise. Then there's also the possibility of backing our new bank notes with precious gems, diamonds and emeralds and such, which the enemy may have left behind. Frank, first break tonight, could you hunt him up if he's still in the building and introduce us? Or if he's already left, could you track him down sometime tomorrow and ask him to get in touch with me so we can set up a meeting?"

"Will do," said Barrow.

"Our main source of revenue during the first year, until we can figure out where we stand on currency and taxes, will have to be the spoils of war," Ridgeway went on. "To the victor go the spoils, and fortunately for us we're the victors. I have 32 people working for me now, and today I assigned over half of them to track down and identify potential assets of our former enemies to be nationalized, including corporate assets, which is a damned long list. Those lists we made up before Longview, during the war, are proving to be invaluable, but there's a lot more out there. Basically, anything that was the property of Jews or Asians or certain large corporations can be assumed to be the proceeds of theft or deception or general criminal activity, in the sense that they came here to this land to take what was ours, and if they have it, now it's ours again. If they left it behind, it goes into the Republic's kitty. Houses, land, businesses, commercial premises and manufacturing plants—that ought to interest you, Gary—bank accounts, cash, jewelry we can melt down for Comrade Mackintosh's new coinage, personal possessions, their goddamned furniture, everything."

"Race and Resettlement will want first dibs on the real estate," said Brennan. "Have you seen the news footage on the interstates? We have as many people coming into the Republic as are leaving. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if we actually ended up with a net population *gain*, and we're going to need someplace to house new migrants."

"Yes, I understand that, Pat," agreed Ridgeway. "You get first refusal on actual housing, but there will be plenty of commercial and undeveloped real estate that we can sell to the private sector, assuming the private sector has any money to buy it. We'll probably end up land rich and cash poor. John, I'm going to need some muscle to do a little organized looting for the public good, more than the Ministry of Justice and our day-old Civil Guard can provide. Thousands of men in the long run, to track down every enemy asset and make sure it ends up in the Treasury and not in somebody's sticky fingers. Once people in the Northwest realize there's an Aladdin's cave of former Unionist wealth lying around, everybody's going to want to help themselves. Okay, if the local white people want to boost some absconded kike's Lexus or clean out some dothead's living room, or nick some fled FBI man's power tools out of his garage, fair enough. These people were parasites, they stole their wealth from our Folk, and although as a rule I'm not comfortable countenancing theft, in a sense I can understand that kind of thing. Fog of war, and all that. But the Republic has dibs on the big ticket items like money, real property, jewelry and precious metals. We're going to have to make it for a while on this serendipitous windfall, or inheritance, or whatever you want to call it, until we can get our own economy and monetary system up and running, and that may take time. We're going to have to stretch this inheritance for quite a while."

"Send me an estimate of how many troops you'll need and I'll second them to Finance," said Morgan. "We have still got thousands of trainees going through the depots in Centralia and Salem and Seattle. I can get you the manpower."

"Better check with me and Frank first on the manpower, John," said Morehouse grimly. "There's still fighting to be done, I'm sorry to say. Maybe we can add some of Ray's organized looting sprees to the mission of Force 101."

"What's Force 101?" asked Ridgeway.

"We need to get into that now," said Morehouse.

John Corbett Morgan got up from his seat, went to the door and beckoned someone in from the hallway outside. A block-like young man with a fiery red beard and burning blue eyes walked in dressed in

NDF tiger-striped camos. He stood to attention and saluted Morehouse and the Cabinet table in general. Morgan introduced him. "For those of you comrades who don't know him, this is Commandant David Leach of the Ellensburg Flying column, now Colonel Leach of the NDF. Some of you may remember him as one of the few Volunteers from the Olympic Flying Column who survived the Ravenhill ambush. [See *The Hill of the Ravens* by the author.]

"If I may, sir, I'd just like mention to Minister Bonnar that I had the honor of serving with your sister Anne when I was with the Olympic Column," said Leach. "She was a brave soldier and a true comrade, ma'am."

"She was indeed," agreed Fiona sadly. "Thank you, Colonel."

"Colonel Leach will be commanding a special action group of around two thousand men," Morgan continued. "They have been hand-picked in a large measure from NVA veterans of the revolt, but also some who have joined us since the July Days. Mostly men who lost wives and daughters to niggers or muds or ZOG, if you want to know the truth. Some of them will be drawn from O.C. Oglevy's North Idaho Rangers partisan unit, an outfit that Comrade Leach also served with before he moved to Ellensburg and took over the Column there. This corps will be referred to as Force 101. Colonel Leach will be reporting directly to me, and we will both be working closely with General Barrow and the Third Section, or I guess the Bureau of State Security as it will be soon whenever things get formalized. I will not just be in nominal charge, I will be participating in Force 101's operations myself, by way of accepting responsibility. I will not order men on a mission like this, and then stand back and try to keep my own hands clean."

"What mission is that?" asked Jennings.

Red Morehouse answered him. "As you know, while almost all of the actual American military and administrative personnel have now been withdrawn from the Northwest, large sections of the country have yet to be occupied and assimilated into the Republic, which is a different and more complex process than simply chasing the American bureaucrats and the local Chamber of Commerce out. General Barrow,

this is part of your Security portfolio, I believe? Can you bring us up to speed?"

"Okay, here's the sitch." said Barrow "There are currently loyalist paramilitaries and vigilantes who have seized temporary control in a lot of places, mostly small towns east of the Cascades and over in Idaho and Montana. Wyoming especially is in free fall. We weren't expecting to get that state at Longview, and we never had that many people down there to begin with, and so we're really having to scramble. We have to move fast, and stomp on these Amurrican snakes before they can get organized and maybe provoke some kind of new intervention on the part of the United States, or even the goddamned United Nations. The Republic's political control of the country is now more or less firmed up in the major cities, and also certain of our own liberated zones that the NVA established during the revolt, like the Oregon north shore, thanks to Zack Hatfield and his Wild Bunch boys. But the Northwest is a big place. There are whole huge swaths of territory that saw little or no action during the War of Independence, because they were so out of the way and ironically, also because they were so white. There was no point in the NVA going where there was nobody to shoot. A lot of the people in these little towns and rural areas are confused. They're still infected with liberalism and in some cases with Zionism through their churches. They are ripe for deception and victimization by counterrevolutionary elements. We don't want to allow any kind of Unionist reactionary campaign to develop in the countryside. Those can be very difficult to stop. Hell, the entire might of the United States of America couldn't stop *us* under similar circumstances."

"So this Force 101 will be dealing with loyalist vigilantes and John Wayne wannabes?" asked Salvatore.

"Not just them, sir," Colonel Leach answered him. "Officially Force 101 is a rapid response team that will be used to put out brushfires in these small towns where a few idiots decide they don't want to be ruled by Natsies who is agin' the Bible, and they hoist up the Masonic dishrag again. That will certainly be part of our remit, yes. But only part of it. We will also be performing a quiet but thorough cleansing of the entire country."

"Cleansing?" asked Jennings.

"We're going to take out the last of the trash left over from the revolt and from all the years before, sir," Leach told him.

"You're going to kill people," said Fiona Bonnar accusingly.

"Quite a few people, yes ma'am," confirmed Leach. "Race-mixers, drug dealers, lefties and liberals of every conceivable stripe, bugger boys and dykes, American informers and collaborators from the past five years and before, Union sympathizers who gave concrete aid and comfort to the Americans and FATPO, the last dregs of Amurrica. Almost all of these kinds of people have had sense enough to get the hell out by now. You can see them running away when you flick on the TV. The interstates going out of the Republic are clogged with their cars as they flee from the people and the land they have betrayed. But there will be some who stay behind, either because they hope to continue to do harm to our new country, or they think the Americans will be coming back soon and they can cash in, or else because they think we've forgotten who they are and what they've done, and they can hide from us and resume some kind of normal lives as if nothing ever happened. But we haven't forgotten. We will never forget, and we will never forgive. That much we've learned from the Jews. The Northwest Republic needs a clean start, comrades. No one who actively aided the tyrant gets to be in on that."

Ray Ridgeway, who was sitting next to Red Morehouse, made a note on the yellow legal pad in front of him. *One of Oglevy's maniacs?* Morehouse glanced down at it and nodded. Ridgeway added on the pad, *Why not use Oglevy himself? Sounds right up his alley.*

Morehouse reached over and scribbled, *We want to kill the rats, not burn down the barn.* He looked over at Public Health Minister Bonnar. "Fi, I know this sounds bad. It *is* bad, and I for one have no intention of trying to deny that fact or whitewash all this. We're all going to be racking up some bad karma over Force 101. But Colonel Leach is right. We have to start with a completely clean slate. We can't leave all these problem people from the old days lurking around below the surface or on the edges, where they may do harm. The Americans and world Jewry are going to be doing their level best to strangle our new nation in the cradle, and we have to deal with anyone who might help them, without hesitation and without mercy. We can't risk erring on the side

of clemency. Mercy to an enemy is cruelty to one's own, and in this case, the very existence of the white race is at stake. We *dare* not turn away from our duty."

Barrow weighed in. "Fiona, we *cannot* allow a potential fifth column to remain in our midst out of misplaced compassion. We won't be able to get all of those who secretly yearn for the old order that gave them such luxury and allowed them to wallow in such beastly pleasures in return for their souls, but by meting out condign punishment to a few, we can damned well send a message to the rest of them that the old days are gone and they'd bloody well better wake up and smell the coffee. In any event, are there any among us here whose hands are clean? I seem to recall that a few years ago, you delivered some packages for the NVA. Abortion clinics were your specialty, I believe?"

"Yes," replied Bonnar with a grim smile. "I haven't forgotten, and I am willing to answer for what I did to God if He so demands of me when my time comes. That was necessary to save the lives of unborn children."

"And with all due respect, ma'am, this is necessary to save the life of our newly born nation," said Leach briskly.

"Frank, John, what guarantee can you give us that only the guilty will suffer in these coming purges or whatever you want to call them?" persisted Bonnar. "We can't turn this into the French Revolution or the Stalin era, with white people being executed on the word of anonymous informers who may well be vindictive former spouses, or disgruntled employees, or people with personal grudges to settle."

"Absolute, one-hundred per cent cast-iron guarantee? None," said Barrow. "I will say this much: Force 101 and the new Bureau of State Security will not act on simple denunciation. They have been provided with detailed lists of suspect persons that are the result of many years of work on the part of the Third Section, during the revolt and also in the old Party days before that. No one is on those lists without a reason, Fi."

Colonel Leach addressed her. "Madam Minister, I've looked over those lists and examined every name we've been given so far by Minister Barrow's people, every one of which has been counterchecked and signed off on by Dan McGrew and Heather Redmond. If you know

those two comrades, you know they would only list the really bad actors. There are tens of thousands of names, and I know that sounds like a lot, but if it makes you feel any better, we probably won't catch most of them. I suspect they'll be like the Jews on the Eastern Front during the Second World War who hooked up and booked when they heard the SS was coming. The majority of the names on the lists are white people who are proven or reliably reported to us to have engaged in sexual relations with niggers, Jews or other non-whites, for which as far as I'm concerned there is no excuse. In someone like that, the liberal sickness has gone too far, and they are beyond cure or redemption. There are also a lot of faggots and dykes who would have to be crazy to stick around waiting for the axe to fall, and who probably won't. Then there's informers, or at least people whom we believe to a moral certainty were informers. It looks like the FBI and other retreating feds and cops destroyed their hard drives and as many of their records as they could, but Third Section wasn't just sitting on their hands for the past five years, and they know who did what. Can I swear to you that innocent people haven't ended up on those lists by accident or mistake? No, ma'am, I can't. But I will tell you this: in any specific case that comes to my own attention, if there is any doubt in my mind at all, we will hold the person in question in custody and refer them to BOSS for further investigation, until their status can be cleared up. I'm afraid that's as good as it's going to get."

"Fiona, Dan and Heather can't be here tonight because they're taking care of some special work for us," Morehouse told her kindly. "But they should be back in town in a couple of days. What say I arrange for you to sit down with them? This government as a whole has a heavy burden to shoulder in this matter. It is what it is. In order for you to do the kind of good things for our people I know you want to do in the field of health and medicine, you have to shoulder part of it, too. We'll give you all the help and reassurance we can."

"I'm not some hysterical female who faints at the sight of blood, Red," replied Bonnar dourly. "Neither was my sister who died at Ravenhill. I think you all know that about me. It's just that there has been so much terrible suffering and injustice in this land for so long, and I don't mean only for the past five years of the revolt. I know there

still has to be more blood. I just want to make sure it's the blood of the guilty."

"As much as it is humanly possible for us to make sure of that, it will be," Morehouse assured her. He stood up. "Right, let's take a supper break and see if we can be back here by seven o'clock."

"Frank, could you check around outside and see if you can buttonhole that fellow Mackintosh for me?" Ridgeway reminded him.

"Sure thing," said Barrow.

"Oh, one more thing, before I forget," said Morehouse as they arose from the table. "I have the honor to report that the Old Man has now arrived on the Republic's soil. I was told that his plane landed at Sea-Tac just before we began tonight's meeting." There was an outburst of applause and cheering from the people in the room.

"It was that threat to send O.C. Oglevy and the boys down to Florence to collect him that made the bastards let him go," chuckled Morgan.

"Probably," replied Morehouse with a smile. "We were going to schedule a big formal welcome at the airport, brass band and speeches and the whole nine yards, but he vetoed it. There will, however, be a formal welcome for him tomorrow night at six p.m. in the Reception Room, down the hall here. Dress uniform for those of us who have them. And guys, I know General Order Number Ten goes out at midnight tonight and so there will be beer and cocktails and whatnot tomorrow night, but let's not let him be confronted by the heroes who won our Homeland as a bunch of staggering drunks whooping and waving guns in the air, shall we?"

"He'd probably just think he's back on Glenn Miller's farm," said Morgan.

II

Daly Avenue

(34 days after Longview)

"Mightier than the tread of marching armies is the power of an idea whose time has come."
—Victor Hugo

The Northwest American Republic arrived in Missoula, Montana, in the early morning hours of the Monday after Thanksgiving, along with the first major snowfall of the year. Forty-year-old Amber Myers awoke in the bedroom of her affluent middle-class home on Daly Avenue in Missoula's University District, with the first soft snowy light outside whitening the windows. She had not slept well; it was known that the Nationalist army was approaching the city, but no one seemed able or willing to give the public any details. As she lay in bed she heard muffled noises in the street outside, men's voices and the rumble of engines. She got up, put on her robe and looked out the window.

A thick white curtain of snow was falling on Daly Avenue, obscuring everything in a floating white curtain, muffling the sky and houses and rooftops. Out on the street in front of her house, Amber could see a number of trucks and Humvees with snow tires and rattling chains rolling slowly by, painted in camouflage, with blue, white and green roundels on the doors. By the glow of their headlights, and beneath the streetlights that were still on in the white dawn, Amber could see files of armed men in camouflage field jackets and coal-scuttle helmets moving eastward down the street along both sidewalks. Their breath frosted in the freezing air, and their rifles were held at the ready. The column was moving toward the University of Montana campus a few blocks down.

Amber woke up her husband, Doctor Clancy Myers, and whispered to him in terror, *"They're here!"*

"Are the kids all right?" demanded Clancy, lifting himself up in bed, still groggy from sleep.

"Yes," Amber told him. "The Nazis haven't come in the house. They're out on the street. I think they're occupying the campus."

"I thought we had more time," mumbled Clancy. "At least until the Christmas break. Not that there are many students left on campus. The news reports said the towns and cities to the west of here were resisting them. They weren't due for weeks!"

"And where were the media getting their information?" raved Amber. "Six months ago they were telling everybody that the FBI and FATPO had the racist terrorists on the run, and everything would be returning to normal soon! Then the President went on national television and told us she was talking to the sons of bitches, but oh, no, not to worry! She was just doing that to get them to play nice, and be reasonable, and stop murdering people. Chelsea and her mother would *never* hand us over to be ruled by fascist sociopaths, oh, no, that would *never* happen! How many times were we assured of that? The goddamned media don't know anything about what's going on in this country, any more than anyone else does! They've spent the past six months reading government press releases like parrots, while that bitch in the White House and her hag of a mother sold the Northwest out because keeping us free was getting to be too expensive! And the so-called Missoula Patriotic Committee have had their heads up their asses ever since this horrible thing happened. We should have at least *tried* to resist!"

"Yes, so you've said," snapped Clancy, sitting up on the side of the bed. "Resist with *what*? All the Patriotic Committee was ever able to put together was a bunch of drunken cowboys waving their deer rifles and American flags in the air like John Wayne, all of whom seem to have vanished when the first fascist tanks actually rolled over the Bitterroot. Guess when it came time to shit or get off the pot, or should I say shoot or get off the pot, our wannabe John Waynes had more sense than they let on. Come on, Amber, you saw what these people did to Portland! They defeated the United States Marine Corps, for God's

sake! How the hell are we supposed to fight that? They seem to have conjured an army up out of the earth, God knows how."

"Better to die on our feet than live on our knees!" snapped Amber.

"I wonder if you would still say that when the artillery shells and the bombs started falling in our own back yard?" asked her husband. "Where would we have hidden the children? Where would we be safe?" His wife remained silent. "Oh, yes, I forgot, I'm not supposed to be safe. I'm supposed to be showing my middle-aged macho in this time of crisis. Yes, I could well see me on a barricade out on Highway 93, freezing my ass off in the snow," Clancy went on with a sigh. "With my forty extra pounds, and my varicose veins, and my glasses all fogged up, fumbling around in mittens with some rifle I'd just fired for the first time the day before, maybe. Going up against thousands of bearded, tattooed, homicidal psychopaths armed to the teeth, with tanks and artillery to back them up, who have just run the entire United States military out of the Pacific Northwest. That would be a truly Quixotic way to throw away a PhD in English literature. My doctoral thesis on Jack Kerouac would stand me in good stead out there on the ramparts of glory, for all of two minutes, and then you would be a widow and my children would be without a father. A rather high price to pay for a moment of drama, don't you think? I'm sorry if you think I'm a coward, Ammy. I'm not. But I just don't see anything brave about throwing my life away and leaving you guys behind to live with the result."

"Then if you won't fight for them, what's going to happen to our children now, Clancy?" sobbed Amber. "I don't understand! How could President Clinton have betrayed us like this?" she wailed.

"She's a politician, she's a Democrat, and beyond that she's a Clinton," said Clancy wearily. "It's what she does."

Amber and Clancy went downstairs into the living room, where they found their two children Kevin and Georgia, both still in their pajamas and staring out the picture window through the snow at the column of soldiers and vehicles. "Mom, Dad, they're here! They've got *tanks*!" cried ten-year-old Georgia in excitement.

"Silly Peanut, those aren't tanks, they're Strykers," said Kevin with the superiority of a 13-year-old video game expert. "They captured them from the Americans."

"Oh, for God's sake! *You* are an American, Kevin Myers, and don't you ever forget it!" snapped Amber angrily.

"Then so are they," said Kevin, pointing to the passing NDF column outside the window.

"No, they are *not!* They're all foreigners and criminals and crazy people!" said his mother. She stopped herself; Amber was angry and terrified, but she wasn't stupid. She had followed the news over the past five years, and she knew her statement wasn't true, as irritating as she found the fact. She also knew that her son knew it. As shocking as Amber still found the fact, the Myers family had actually known neighbors and friends, or at least acquaintances, who had gone with the Nationalists and even the NVA itself. "All right, maybe some of them were born here," she conceded. "But they're certainly criminals, and what they have done to the Northwest and to the country as a whole is unforgivable. I don't know why they have done this. I never had anything against people with a different skin color, and we have raised you children not to harbor that kind of hatred either. They *have* to be crazy, that's all. Anyone who commits terrorism and murder for any cause is by definition insane."

"Is Jenny crazy, Mom?" asked Georgia in a small voice. Jenny Campbell had been Georgia's favorite babysitter in the days before she had to go on the bounce with the NVA. "Is she bad?"

"Honey, Jenny is—well, she's very wrong to do what she's done, is all," said Amber lamely.

"Does this mean that I can hang out with Bobby Campbell again now?" asked Kevin eagerly. He had been forbidden his best friend's company for a long time. "It might help you guys to get on the good side of the new bosses."

"You know, that might not be a bad idea," said Clancy slowly.

"Oh, for . . . *Clancy*!" yelped Amber. "We cut the Campbells off when we found out they were terrorist sympathizers and their daughter was a murderer, and that is still the case! We will *never,* ever associate with people like that!"

"I don't know how much choice we will have, dear," said Clancy soothingly. "People like that, as you put it, seem to be in charge now. Let's see if we can find out what's going on."

They turned on the television to their local CBS channel, KPAX-TV, expecting to see handsome morning newscaster Brad Jensen with his flawlessly capped teeth, as usual. Instead, what they saw was the KPAX news desk, but no *Brad in the Morning*. Seated behind it, fiddling with a clip-on microphone he was trying to attach to his tunic, was a young man with a sandy beard, wearing NDF tiger-stripes and a billed Alpine cap. The sight of the dreaded National Socialist eagle emblem on both cap and fatigue tunic jarred Amber and Clancy Myers; somehow the eagle right there on the sacred screen itself made it all seem real, in a way that none of the news over the past few months had done.

The young man looked up at the camera, startled. "Huh? We on the air? Oh, okay." He sat up straight, "Uh, hey there, all you folks out in TV land. My name's Captain Ricky Johnson, Tenth Infantry Brigade, Northwest Defense Force. I'm originally from down Anaconda way. Mr. Jensen can't be here this morning. He's kind of indisposed. Well, folks, if you've been looking out your windows this morning, you know that here we are, and here we're staying," the young soldier told them cheerfully. "Over the next few months, we're gonna be bringing the city of Missoula formally into the Northwest American Republic, as per the Longview Treaty. I guess by now you people living here all pretty much know the details of that treaty as it applies to Montana, but just to re-cap, everything west of Interstate 15 is now part of the Republic, and everything east of 15 still belongs to the goddamned Jews. Helena and Great Falls get split right down the middle.

"In case you're wondering why you didn't hear any shooting or sirens or explosions last night when we moved in, it's because your so-called Patriotic Committee, your mayor, the city council, and that bunch of clowns they called a loyal Amurrican militia all skedaddled when it came down to the wire. They didn't want to get what Portland got. But don't get me wrong, I ain't criticizing. We're all glad they ran. There's been enough fighting and killing, and it's time to stop all that shit and get this show on the road. Huh?" A female voice off camera was saying something to Johnson. "Well, ma'am, in case you hadn't

noticed, the Federal Communications Commission don't have no say any more about what words we can say on the air, but you're right. Folks, I apologize for my language just now. No point in taking the Northwest away from the niggers if we're gonna keep talking like 'em. I'll do my best to keep it clean from here on in. Don't worry, you won't have to put up with me for long. We'll be getting somebody in here to do the news who's more professional than me, and a da—a sight better looking, as soon as we can."

Johnson went on, "For now, I just want to let you folks know in a general way what's going on, and talk at you about how you can make this a whole lot easier for everybody. I know those yay-hoos from the Patriotic Committee have been telling you for the past month that the NDF is gonna come in here whooping and shooting up the town, and rapin' your grandmothers, and all kinds of crap like that. Pardon me, all kinds of *nonsense* like that. That's just not true. We are now the legitimate government in Missoula, and you folks out there are our fellow white people and fellow citizens. Truth be told, we've been doing all this for the past five years as much for you as for ourselves.

"The first thing we want to do is make sure that essential services remain open," continued Captain Johnson, as Clancy and Amber Myers stared at the screen in stupefaction. "We're asking first and foremost, that snow plow and salt truck drivers report to work as scheduled. We have men who can drive them in the army, true, and if we have to we'll clear the streets ourselves, but it's not really our job, is it? We also ask that those of you who work in certain fields and provide essential services report to work as normal. That includes all medical personnel and firefighters, employees of grocery and hardware stores so people can buy food and supplies, sanitation and landfill workers so garbage doesn't pile up in the streets, and also city utility workers at the power and water and sewage plants. We don't want any of those vitally necessary services disrupted in any way, and we are relying on you to do your duty to your fellow Missoulians, even if you may not think much of the new Republic or its people at the moment. Don't worry, we're not going to hurt anybody unless you try to hurt us first, or unless you've got skin the color of excrement, in which case you brought it on yourself

by being a dumb-ass and not getting the hell out of our country when you had the chance."

Johnson paused. "Now, on the other hand, there are in fact some people who we're asking to take a few days off until things get sorted out. That includes police, Missoula County sheriff's deputies, city and county employees in the administrative fields, and employees of banks. We want to make sure we don't have any unfortunate incidents with police officers who still think they're the law in these parts, which they ain't. There was a bit of a ruckus at the central station and the county jail last night when we moved in. Don't worry, nobody was killed, the boys just had to go upside a couple of dumb-ass Amurrican heads to get them to look at the clock and understand what time it is, but we want to make sure nothing worse happens. You guys are going to have to accept the fact that you're no longer in charge here, we are. I know it's going to be hard, so we figure it's best we just stay out of each other's way for a while and let things settle down a bit. Cops will be called in to your stations in shifts, and we'll explain to you how things will work. You'll be given a chance to go back to work at your old jobs in law enforcement under the new Northwest Civil Guard, unless it turns out you did some really bad acts against us back during the war when we were the NVA. But we'll deal with everybody on an individual basis.

"I have been told to assure you folks that the bank holiday won't last more than a couple of days. We just have to secure all the branches and whatnot on orders from the Finance Ministry in Olympia, make sure no die-hard Unionist types go and filch all the cash in the bank vaults and try to drag it off to the U.S. Not to mention just plain thieves trying to take advantage of the situation. Your deposits are safe; we're not confiscating or stealing your money, we're just making sure nobody else does. So far as I know, the computer lines are still up and running in stores, so you should still be able to buy stuff with plastic. In a couple of places where we've moved in the kikes were able to crash the credit and debit card networks from outside the country, but we got some real slick computer guys in the NDF, and they've gotten the drill down for hacking into these financial systems and building necessary firewalls and fail-safes, so we can hopefully prevent that from happening here."

Johnson leaned forward into the camera. "As far as civil authority goes, for the time being there ain't none, since the mayor of Missoula, the city council, and most of the Chamber of Commerce have lit out for parts unknown. In their absence, the military administrator for Missoula will be General Dan Macready. Some time within the next few months, as decided by the provisional government in Olympia, there will be an election throughout the Republic where all kinds of public offices will be filled, including municipalities, although candidates and voting in that election will be restricted to people who meet the new citizenship requirements, and who are willing to swear an oath of allegiance to the Northwest American Republic. I don't know how many of you have actually read the new Constitution, or at least the bits and pieces of it that have been published in the newspapers and on the internet, but from now on we don't just hand out the vote to any dimwit who happens to have two arms and two legs and a head. That's how we got into all the trouble before, letting niggers and drug addicts and illegal aliens and any damned body vote. Garbage voters vote in garbage politicians.

"No more. From now on citizenship and the right to vote is something that has to be *earned,* and right now the only ones who have earned it are those who fought in the NVA and the NDF. I have been told that there will be ways in which non-NVA veterans may apply for and receive third-class citizenship, which will get you one vote. Us guys who put our lives on the line for our race and our new nation will have two or three votes each, that's true, but that's as it should be. And there's other ways you can get a vote. For example, one of the things they're talking about at the Convention in Olympia is allowing mothers with children to get third class citizenship right away, so long as you're willing to take the oath of loyalty to the Republic. We understand that the results of an election that allows only NVA and NDF people to vote would be considered morally questionable, and so for the first couple of years until we can work up a whole new order of society and a whole new way of doing things, we'll be kind of playing it by ear.

"Now, one more thing I want to talk about," Johnson went on in a serious tone. "I know there are a lot of folks here in Missoula city and county who suffered during the war, even though they weren't

actually NVA. Their only crime was to have white skins. There was an especially nasty FATPO unit stationed here in Missoula, commanded by a monkoid colonel named Pimpin' Sam Porterfoy, as he called himself. Gang-banger from the L.A. Bloods. Fine upstanding Amurrican, was Pimping Sam. You may also remember his second in command, Major Michael Bonaparte, the Haitian voodoo man. I know I sure as hell do, and his magic necklace of white babies' skulls he got from abortion clinics. We all remember what the Americans did, at least to ordinary white people who didn't have one of those nasty-ass little immunity cards issued by Mayor Kirschbaum and his cronies in the liberal University clique who used to run Missoula. Note my terminology there: who *used to* run this town. Not any more!" Johnson said with a sudden grin.

"Oh, my God, our cards! Our *cards*!" cried Amber in sudden fear. "We have to destroy them!" She ran upstairs for her purse.

On the TV screen, Captain Ricky Johnson was speaking on. "There are those of you who have lost loved ones because of what the United States occupation forces have done. There are others who have had loved ones disappear, either shipped to the concentration camps in Nevada, or else simply buried out in the landfill by Porterfoy and Bonaparte and their thugs. You know who among the community fought against the Americans, and you know who helped them. No one on earth could blame some of you for wanting to take vengeance against those who oppressed and tortured and tyrannized you for five years, but since the actual perpetrators are gone, you will be tempted to take it out on those collaborators who remain here. Folks, on behalf of the new government of the Northwest American Republic, I'm asking you not to do that. *Let us handle it*. Actually, we're already doing so. Among the first of our men into the city last night were some gentlemen from an outfit called Force 101. Those boys specialize in making right what has been wrong for so long. I'm not going to get into details, but there are some of your fellow Missoula residents who you won't be seeing around any more, and we're not going deny or conceal that fact. It's time Amurrica learned that what goes around, comes around.

"Don't worry, if you or someone you love was murdered, if your family was robbed or injured by the Americans during this time, you will have justice and such compensation as it may be possible to make.

If you have something to say, if you have a serious accusation to make against anyone who helped the tyrant to do actual harm, or who profited from tyranny, or if you know some white man or woman who has defiled their body with an animal or someone of the same gender, then bring it to the new administration down at city hall. Ask for the Force 101 guy or the Bureau of State Security rep. I promise you will have our full attention."

Amber ran into the living room with her purse and Clancy's wallet in her hand. "My God, do you hear that?" she cried in a shrill voice. "I heard that! They're coming after anyone who stayed loyal to America! We have to get rid of the evidence!"

She pulled out her own wallet from her purse and extracted a laminated card the size and shape of a driver's license, bearing her photograph and small embossed symbols, a Missoula city seal and a FATPO ID number. This was what had been known in Missoula as a Get Out Of Jail Free Card, or more earthily, a Back the [expletive of choice] Off Fattie Card. The text asserted that Ms. Amber Escott-Myers had been fully vetted and triple background-checked by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Intelligence Bureau of the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization. She was known to be a loyal citizen of the United States, and was therefore entitled to all due courtesy and assistance from FATPO and the assorted other alphabet soup agencies who had attempted to suppress the NVA revolt for the past five years. "Give me yours!" she ordered her husband. Bemused, Clancy handed Amber his own card from his wallet. She ran into the kitchen, got scissors, and then coming back into the living room, she meticulously cut both cards into small strips. Then she balled up several pages of newspaper, threw them into the fireplace, and lit them on fire with a match, after which she threw all the little pieces of plastic into the flames.

"Ick! That stinks!" said Georgia, wrinkling her nose.

"They can find out who had the cards from computer records at city hall or at the old Fattie HQ," commented Kevin.

"They destroyed the records! They promised they would before they left us here at the mercy of these kill-crazy Nazi thugs!" wailed Amber.

"Yeah, they promised, but the Fatties were mostly stupid niggers, and they probably screwed it up," said Kevin.

"Kevin!" screamed Amber hysterically. "Don't you ever, *ever* say that horrible word in this house or in my presence again, and especially in your sister's hearing!"

"Uh, Mom, it's all right to say nigger now," said Kevin, gesturing at the television. "Don't you get it? No more politically correct bullshit! White people can say what they really feel now!"

"Get out!" said Amber frigidly. "Get out of my sight, Kevin! Go to your room and don't come out until I say you can."

Kevin complied, shuffling up the stairs. "I'll just keep on watching the news on my laptop!" he called down defiantly.

"Clancy, we have to make a decision," demanded Amber, clicking the television into mute mode with the remote. "We have got to work up the courage and make a plan to get out of this city and back into the U.S.A. Even now, even with the snow, it may not be too late. The news, at least the news channels that are still in American hands, have been reporting that the roads heading east and south are still clear. I know that Nazi on TV said the banks will be closed, but we did take the precaution of drawing that five grand in cash out two weeks ago. Families have started over on a lot less. We can get to my mother in D.C. on that, for sure."

"Just leave everything we have here, except what we can get in the Range Rover?" demanded Clancy. "Ammy, look, we have talked about this and talked about it. Hell, we've talked about nothing else since Longview. I thought we had finally agreed to stay in our home and not allow ourselves to be driven out."

"That was before I heard our son utter that—that—that *word*!" shouted Amber. "What in God's name will he be like after a year or two being raised with Nazi propaganda all around? I'm not going to have a little Hitler Youth in the house! And what about Georgia? She has blond hair, so these monsters will probably use her for breeding stock!"

"What's breeding stock, Mom?" asked Georgia, looking at her own hair with interest.

"They're going to make you have blond babies!" wept Amber.

"Uh, Mom, I'm not old enough to have babies yet," said Georgia. "My sex education teacher says I have to be at least thirteen or fourteen and wait until my . . ."

"Probably better than Kevin being raised by a Gameboy Play Station or whatever the hell it is he spends all his time with," sighed Clancy. "I repeat, Amber, we discussed this at length and we decided to stay."

"That was when I thought there was still a chance," argued Amber. "That was when I thought we were going to fight. When I thought *you* were going to fight!" she added bitterly.

"Well, pardon me for being alive," said Clancy in irritation. "Ammy, I know a Nazi bullet would have been a lot cheaper than a divorce lawyer, not to mention providing endless opportunities for you to play the drama queen off the whole patriotic American widow shtick for the rest of your life, but I'm sorry, I just couldn't see my way to going down in a hail of lead gibbering like Sydney Carton about how it's a far, far better thing I do!"

"Are you guys talking divorce again?" asked Georgia sadly. They had forgotten she was in the room,

"Georgie, honey, I think you need to go to your room and get dressed as well," said Amber.

"Are Kev and me going to school?" asked Georgia.

"I don't think so, dear," said Amber. "I don't think that's a good idea. We don't even know if the schools are open, and when they do open back up they will probably start teaching you to worship Adolf Hitler and hate black people and Mexican and Jewish people, which we are not going to allow to happen under any circumstances whatsoever," she added with a fierce look at her husband. "Right now just go upstairs and get dressed, honey, and then we'll have breakfast and you and Kevin can make a snowman in the back yard. I don't want you leaving the house for a while. It's not safe outside."

"And where would we go? Just sponge off your mother?" demanded Clancy. "Both our jobs are here."

"Do you still think they'll let you teach?" Amber asked him. "UM has been using an inclusive and multiculturally diverse curriculum for years. Do you think the Nazis won't find out? What will they do to you when they find out you've been teaching Saul Bellow, James Baldwin

and Maya Angelou? What will they do when they see tapes of your seminars on Armistead Maupin and gay literature?"

"Send me back to teaching Chaucer, Shakespeare, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Mark Twain and Stephen Crane?" suggested Clancy. "I could do that. In fact, I really think I'd *like* to do that. Teach real English literature that has stood the test of time and not just passed a politically correct litmus test. Or Ambrose Bierce. God, I'd love to do an Ambrose Bierce seminar again!" Amber looked like she was about to explode into a liberal hissy fit, but she was interrupted.

"Look, Mom!" Georgia cried out suddenly, pointing to the television screen. "It's Jenny! Jenny's on TV!"

Sure enough, Amber looked up and saw Georgia's former babysitter Jennifer Campbell standing beside the NDF captain Johnson behind the desk and taking his microphone. She was wearing not tiger stripes, but an NDF female garrison uniform with dark green skirt and a khaki blouse, Sam Browne belt, a holstered pistol, and a black beret. The ever-present eagle was over her buttoned right pocket. Amber clicked on the sound. "Now didn't I tell you they'd be sending in somebody who's a lot easier on the eyeballs than me?" Johnson was saying with a laugh. "It's all yours, ma'am. Take her away!"

"Thanks, Rick," said Jenny, seating herself behind the desk. "I'm Captain Jennifer Stockdale, General Macready's press secretary, and I will be doing the morning and evening news for a while here on KPAX-TV."

"I thought Jenny's last name was Campbell," said Georgia.

"She must have married that psychotic killer Jason Stockdale, the man whose picture those FBI agents showed us when they came here that time," said Amber. "In which case her name is now Jennifer Campbell-Stockdale. I don't suppose these NVA bitches have the guts to stand up to their Neanderthal men and demand to keep their own names."

"They seem to have stood up to the FBI and FATPO well enough," remarked Clancy. "It's probably part of their political and social program. I would imagine that under the new order we're going back to the old ways, as contradictory as that sounds." His own wife's feminist refusal to take his own family name had always irked Clancy, and he suddenly

felt the germ of a suspicion that life under the Northwest American Republic might have its compensations after all. Not to mention avoiding the necessity of throwing the family on the tender mercy of Amber's ghastly mother, a Washington, D.C., socialite who had never met a left wing or liberal cause she didn't like, no matter how far out.

* * *

The next morning Dr. Clancy Myers got a call from Doug Raeburn, one of his colleagues in the University of Montana English department. The department head, Dr. Benjamin Levy, had fled to New York a year before, after the campus sniffer dogs had discovered a radio-controlled bomb taped to the bottom of his Lincoln Town Car. Whatever NVA person was watching for him to get in decided to go ahead and detonate it anyway, to send a message, or possibly just for the pleasure of blowing up a Jew's automobile. The bomb hurled shrapnel and a burning tire through the window of the lecture hall where Dr. Levy was discoursing on the Class Consciousness of John Milton, based on his own definitive tome *Marx in Paradise*. The message was received loud and clear, and from then on Dr. Levy delivered his class lectures on how Milton was a closet Commie from Brooklyn, via a large plasma satellite video screen.

"Did you get the e-mail from that General Macready character to the UM faculty?" Raeburn asked him.

"No," said Clancy. "Amber spent yesterday wiping the hard drives on all our computers clean and reformatting them and closing all our e-mail accounts, and so I haven't bothered to log on today. She thinks that she can hide her politics from the Nazis, which I rather doubt, but in a way, I hope she's right. She's hysterical, she's a bitch, and we probably would have ended up divorced if this catastrophe hadn't happened, but I don't want her dead. Or me."

"Full meeting at eleven in the faculty lounge," Raeburn told Clancy. "We can't fill up the auditorium any more. Not enough of us left. Odd, how he would know that. I get the feeling these guys have really done their homework. Somehow I don't think Ben Levy will be sitting in on this one by satellite hookup."

"Why?" asked Clancy. "Are we finally getting a new department head? Well, I suppose we would, wouldn't we?"

"Rumor has it we're getting a Chancellor as well, courtesy of the new brooms in town," said Raeburn.

"Boy, they don't waste any time, do they?" said Myers. "Nazi efficiency, eh? What happened to Frobisher? Or dare I even ask?"

"Oh, he cleared out with the mayor and his compatriots on the Patriotic Committee," said Raeburn. "He didn't stop running until he got to Minneapolis. I got a call from him this morning. He sounded drunk."

"So?"

"Well, drunker than usual. He was sobbing that it was all over. It probably is, for him," said Raeburn with a chuckle.

"Oh, I wouldn't count Lord Frodo out," said Myers. "He will now spend the rest of his career sucking off the teat of martyrdom, singing for his supper by re-telling over and over again on countless talk shows how he had to flee into the night from his beloved Big Sky Country with the hellhounds of the SS nipping at his heels. By the time he gets his book deal, the story will probably end up resembling the scene out of *Uncle Tom's Cabin,* and our illustrious Chancellor will be crossing the ice like Eliza, pursued by Simon Legree and a pack of bloodthirsty dogs. Hell, Doug, we've got another Holocaust industry in the making here."

"As recently as a month ago I would have hung up the phone and erased your number if you'd said something like that, for fear Homeland Security would be listening," said Raeburn with a grim chuckle.

"Well, Doug, I don't know how long it will be before the Gestapo is listening instead, but I have to admit, for the moment it's a good feeling to be able to have a simple phone conversation without self-censorship," agreed Clancy. "See you in a bit."

Clancy walked into the meeting at 11 a.m. and found about 50 of his colleagues from all departments gathered in the long, spacious lounge. The University's pre-war teaching staff had numbered over 400, including TAs and grad students. Now all the blacks, Jews, Hispanics, Asians and open homosexuals were gone, as well as about half of the remaining white faculty whose views and curricula, like that of the

quondam Chancellor Frobisher, were sufficiently left of center to cause them to depart from the Northwest before the arrival of the NDF.

Myers recognized some of his closest friends like Raeburn, Dr. Peter Klosterberg of the history department, Dr. Jan Renner from the School of Engineering, Professor Heidi Winters from his own English department, and the elderly Dr. Charles Luger, who seemed to be the sole remaining member of the Political Science department. The lounge didn't have an actual bar, since that would have required such formalities as a liquor license. However, a generous miscellaneous upkeep fund courtesy of the taxpayers provided a long antique sideboard filled up with rows of bottles, decanters, and glasses, as well as a discreet refrigerator beside the sideboard full of bottles of imported beer and chilled steins. Even in a fairly minor grove of academe like the University of Montana, America's intellectual élite had always lived well. Myers saw that virtually every faculty member now had a drink in their hand, in violation of the genteel "yardarm rule," which had always prohibited liquor consumption in the lounge before 5 p.m. He walked over to Luger. "Boozing already, Charles?" he asked, helping himself to a Scotch. "Even Frodo always confined himself to the bottle he kept in his desk drawer before five."

"We have no idea what our new masters intend, Clancy," replied Luger. "You realize this thug Macready may have called us all together here so he can arrest us all in one fell swoop, and save his men the trouble of running us down in sub-zero snow? This may be the last chance for me to enjoy a large Chivas Regal with a twist before I face the firing squad, and I intend to take advantage of it."

"If you're that worried, why are you staying?" asked Myers.

"I'm sixty-seven years of age, Clancy," said Luger with a rueful chuckle. "I'm far too old to pack my grip and start over in some eastern school, where my learning and my experience, not to mention my race and gender, are now considered obsolete. I hold five university degrees, two of them doctorates. I have been teaching the art and science of politics and statecraft for the past forty years to blockheads, some of whom were barely able to read and understand the TV guide, never mind the Federalist Papers. I admit I used to subscribe to Francis Fukuyama's theory about the end of history. I assumed that Western

man was pretty much stuck with liberal democracy for the duration, a form of government by and for extremely wealthy men and global corporations, controlled and guided by an obscure tribe of Hamitic Semites who managed to survive into the twenty-first century with a Bronze Age religion and the cultural ethic of a school of sharks intact. Yet this bizarre Party that started with one middle-aged eccentric sitting in a flophouse and pounding on a computer keyboard, has now invalidated everything I thought I knew and everything I've been teaching, through the simple expedient of pulling a few triggers and planting a few bombs. It appears that Jefferson, Rousseau, and Locke got it all wrong and Chairman Mao got it right: power comes out of the barrel of a gun, and that still holds true even for us pale over-civilized types, no matter what we thought. I confess that now that these bomb-throwing, race-baiting maniacs have captured the machinery of state power, I will be fascinated to see what they do with it. Unless, like the Khmer Rouge, they decide to slaughter everyone who wears spectacles for being intelligentsia."

They were overheard by Doctor Linda Barnard from the School of Media and Journalism. She was a small, forty-something woman with mousy hair, whose freckles gave her an incongruous appearance of youth. They now stood out like ink spots on her ashen face, and the drink in her hand was shaking with fear. "How can you be so blasé, Charles?" she whispered vehemently. "It's already started! Lou Coppetta is missing! I went over to his house this morning and I found the door smashed in, and no sign of Lou or Sherry!"

"Probably that Force 101 thing," said Myers glumly. "What the hell did he stay for? His doctoral thesis was on the legal validity of Native American land claims to most of the state, he was the University chair for the Montana Human Rights Commission, he helped draft Montana's hatecrime law, and he was a lawyer, for God's sake! Did he think he wasn't on somebody's list? You know, I think this whole thing happened because we simply never could bring ourselves to accept that these are not stupid, ignorant rednecks bashing minorities, and that from the very beginning we were facing a serious and politically focused armed insurrection against the United States."

"Stupid, ignorant rednecks are supposed to be incapable of serious political thought," Luger reminded them. "That was always the Party line, remember? No pun intended. And what about you, Linda? Given your predilection for sleeping with your female undergraduates in return for good grades and job recommendations, I must confess that I'm rather surprised to see you here."

"My mother is in the nursing home," said Linda miserably. "I can't leave her, and I couldn't take her with me. She doesn't know what's been going on. She barely even knows who I am any more, and she'd be terrified if I tried to drive her across country into unfamiliar surroundings. All I can do is hang on here, keep my head down, and hope that somehow I can slip through the cracks."

"Let's hope nobody on campus dislikes you enough to rat you out as a lesbian," said Myers sympathetically. "The University and the FBI aren't the only ones who know how to recruit a network of informers." Linda trembled from head to toe and knocked back her drink, which Clancy observed consisted of vodka, neat.

The door opened and a tall, handsome NDF officer walked in, wearing his Class A uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt and high boots. He was alone, which surprised the assembled academics who had expected a squad of goons in camouflage with machine guns. "Morning, everybody!" he called out cheerfully. "Hey, Doctor Myers, Doctor Luger, remember me?"

"Young Stockdale, isn't it?" asked Luger, raising his specs to peer through them. "You look like someone who should be behind a glass frame from a hundred years ago, on some octogenarian lady's mantelpiece in England, in a house full of cats. Yes, I remember you from several of my classes. You were rather outspoken. I was supposed to report the kind of thing you were saying in class to Homeland Security, but being one of those old fossils with ideas about freedom of speech, I never had the heart to do so. It would seem that I should have."

"Yes, sir, I remember," said Jason, walking up to them at the sidebar. Linda Barnard backed away and tried to fade into the wallpaper. "I always appreciated the fact that you didn't." He held out his hand and shook with Luger, then with a bemused Myers. "I had several classes

with you as well, Dr. Myers. And I remember that you and your family were friends with Jenny Campbell."

"Actually, I gather from the news broadcasts that she's Jenny Stockdale now," said Myers. "I suppose congratulations are in order. Church wedding with all the trimmings, was it?" The whole thing was surreal to him, like some Mad Hatter's tea party.

"Thank you, sir," said Stockdale. "We were married a few weeks ago, after we finished up in Portland, and no, it was pretty informal."

"Well, hail, the conquering hero comes," remarked Luger. "You've even got proper jackboots now."

"Why not?" asked Jason, lifting one leg to show them off. "They're practical, comfortable, and elegant footwear, good for walking around in the snow as well as for stomping Jews with."

Luger sighed, and said "And to think, young man, if you had walked into this room a year ago, I could have tripled my retirement fund with one phone call."

Jason smiled at them sunnily. "If I had walked into this room a year ago, Doctor Luger, when I walked out again, you wouldn't have been making any calls."

"God, I suppose that's true, isn't it?" sighed Luger, with a rueful smile. "My, my, the turn-ups one has out here in the real world. Probably one of the reasons I've always chosen to hide behind the ivy-covered walls all my life. The real world can be so unsettling. In any case, what now? Are you here to arrest us and ship us all off to a concentration camp?"

"I'm here to introduce the next Chancellor of the University of Montana," Stockdale told them.

"And who might that be?" asked Clancy Myers curiously.

"Yes, do tell," asked Luger with a gleam in his eye. "I've often wondered if any of our colleagues here has been secretly polishing the apple with Jerry Reb behind our backs, by way of an insurance policy. Giving you gentry information on the campus and faculty behind our backs, that kind of thing? Like where Ben Levy parked his car?"

"Actually, yes, the NVA had several Third Section ops on campus almost since the beginning," Stockdale told them. "I was one myself for

a while back in the first days of the revolt, and later on so was Jenny, so we both have fond memories of our college days. But no faculty."

"So which one of our esteemed colleagues gets the brass ring?" asked Luger, gesturing with his drink out into the room where everyone else was staring at them and their conversation was perfectly audible. "Who will be our new Chancellor?"

"I will," said Jason. "One of the advantages of being part of a victorious revolution is that once the dust settles, you pretty much have your pick of any job you want. I asked for this one, and in view of my services rendered, I got it."

"And what job does Jenny want? Governor?" asked Clancy Myers.

"No, there won't be any more governors," Jason told them. "Jenny has made a choice that Amurrica denied to her and to all young white women for two generations, a choice that had she had been allowed to make under Zionist rule, might have kept her out of the NVA."

"And what is this forbidden career path?" asked Luger.

"She is going to live in a home that I provide for her, and she is going to be a mother to a new generation of white children," said Stockdale. "The Jews literally stole the babies from our people's cradles, through abortion and feminism and a capitalist economy that forced women to work all their lives just to survive alongside men. We are going to fill those cradles up again. Now, I suppose I need to get the meeting going officially."

"One more question, Jason, a rather urgent one," said Myers. "One of our colleagues is missing. Do you know anything about the whereabouts of Doctor Louis Coppetta and his wife?"

"Doctor Coppetta is no longer on the university faculty. I think you know why as well as I do. That's all I can tell you," Jason told them, with a little smile that froze both men's blood and suddenly brought home to them exactly what was happening in the real world Dr. Luger had always striven to avoid. They suddenly understood that their former student, whom both men had genuinely liked and respected, now had the power to decide if they lived or died.

"Can we see him or his wife, and speak to them?" asked Clancy Myers daringly.

"They're both unavailable," replied Jason, his smile unchanged.

Charles Luger spoke. "I see. Jason, do you remember enough of my course to recall the section on the ancient Roman constitution? How in eighty-one B.C. the Senate formally requested of the dictator Sulla that if he was going to proscribe Roman citizens, could he at least have the courtesy to post a list in the Forum of the men who were to be hunted down and killed? May I ask if such a list exists in our case, and if so, where it can be found? Somewhere on the internet, no doubt?"

"Don't worry, Doctor Luger, you're not on it." Jason assured him genially. "If you were, you wouldn't be here. Besides, you're one of us."

"I beg your pardon?" asked Luger, flummoxed. "How on earth do you make that out, young man?"

"You just said that Sulla began his dictatorship in eighty-one B.C. You see, I do remember your course. I remember that then you used the politically correct eighty-one B.C.E., Before Common Era, as you were required to by the curriculum and which you would have been disciplined for by the Board of Regents if you hadn't. Just now, absent the threat of being ratted out and hauled in front of a lefty-lib kangaroo court that could ruin your career, you said B.C.—Before Christ. Your mind never was fully under control, was it, Doctor Luger?"

"No," admitted Luger. "No, it wasn't, and you're right. A year ago, I would never have made a slip like that. It could have lost me everything."

"And you don't have anything to worry about either, Doctor Myers," said Jason, turning to Clancy and shaking his hand again. "I never got a chance to thank you for what you did for Jenny after that disaster up in Helena, but you can be sure that neither she nor I have forgotten it. The NVA pays its debts. Now, if you'll take a seat, we can get started."

Later that night at the dinner table, the renewed presence of 14-year-old Bobby Campbell reminded Clancy of Jason Stockdale's odd remark. Kevin had invited Bobby over, "now that everything's okay" as he put it, and Amber had been sensible enough not to antagonize the new régime by banning the brother of Montana's most photogenic new newscaster from her home. Clancy Myers mentioned what had happened just before the official meeting had begun. "I have no idea on

earth what the man is talking about!" he complained. Then he noticed Georgia giggling and the two older boys smirking at him. "Wait a minute, do you kids know something about this?"

"Kind of," admitted Kevin.

"Jenny was in the garage!" chirped Georgia with a giant grin, finally able to tell the Great Secret.

"What?" said Amber, nonplussed.

"Remember that day those FBI guys came here talking all the crap about Jenny and showing you pictures of her boyfriend Jason?" asked Kevin. "She was in the garage the whole time. With a gun."

"Two guns! An Uzi and a nine-millimeter Glock!" said Bobby.

"I hid her!" announced Georgia, beaming. "It was a secret!"

"Yeah, Peanut, you hid her all right, but me and Kevin brought her here," said Bobby.

"I hate to admit it, honey, but our kids may have saved our lives," Clancy said to his wife. Amber Myers screamed out loud and fled from the table.

III

Don't Tread On Me

(Four months after Longview)

"Let them fear, so long as they obey."
—Tiberius, Roman emperor

The NAR's Council of Ministers, which was now the formal name of the cabinet, convened in the old governor's conference room in Olympia with the plush red leather chairs on a cold day in late February. There had already been some re-shuffling since the creation of the body back in November. Henry "Red" Morehouse had taken over as permanent Speaker of the Constitutional Convention, whose deliberations were projected to last well into the summer, thus leaving Frank Barrow to deal exclusively with security issues. Dr. Paul Hassling, a physicist with a degree from M.I.T. and a former NVA bombmaker, had joined the cabinet as Energy Minister after it had become apparent that energy was a separate problem of some magnitude, and that Commerce and Industry was too stretched already to cover it.

Since the arrival of the interim State President from his wartime internment, the office of Chairman of the Council of State had been abolished, and Morehouse had been sworn in as interim Vice President of the Republic. Being a former schoolteacher, he had also taken on the Education portfolio from General Dan Macready, who was still in Missoula as NDF commander for the eastern border, and who had evinced no interest at all in the post to begin with. "How did my name ever get put into that particular hat anyway, Red?" he had asked Morehouse on the phone.

"Somebody thought we had too many coasties in the Council, and figured we needed somebody in a cowboy hat," Morehouse responded.

"Beautiful!" said Macready in disgust. "We win our freedom, and the first thing we do is set up affirmative action quotas!"

By common consent, Morehouse continued to act as the chair for Council meetings. Today there was a full quorum, including Andrei Stavrovitch Stepanov, who had become Minister for Culture by virtue of his being a classical music aficionado, and Donald "Farmer" Brown, the Minister of Food and Agriculture, who had once been an actual farmer. The American news media and liberal cable TV pundits sneered at the Northwest ministers for their lack of apparent qualifications, to which Red Morehouse had replied in an interview with the BBC, "Yes, I admit, it's an unusual concept. We believe that the people responsible for government policy and implementation in a given area need to have some actual experience in that field. Liberal democracy's long-standing practice of appointing cabinet ministers on the basis of gender, skin color, and campaign contributions is obviously much superior."

Now Morehouse spoke up. "Right, comrades, our special teleconference call that I memoed all of you about is scheduled for an hour from now. We need to get through as much as we can before then. To begin with, we need to hear situation reports since Friday. First things first. John, how are we militarily?"

"The Northwest Defense Force now numbers approximately four hundred thousand people in all branches," said Morgan, consulting some papers he had brought in a file folder. "A far cry from as recently as two years ago, when the NVA consisted of about eight thousand Volunteers. Almost all of the four hundred thousand are army, of course. The Luftwaffe now has around thirteen thousand personnel and over a thousand aircraft we've commandeered, almost all civilian prop jobs, but we've also got a few private jets and airliners we're converting into fighter-bombers or transports, as well as over a hundred helicopters. We haven't even test-flown half of our aircraft yet. I'm hoping to have the whole Luftwaffe in full and correct uniform by the first week in March. Performance-wise, as you know, they did a slap-up job during the battle of Portland and also during the Consolidation, flying intelligence and observation runs, and some bombing missions against loyalist paramilitaries and general Amurrican knuckleheads within the Republic."

"Point of order. Is that what we're calling our current period of time now?" asked Bart DeMarco from the Transport Ministry. "I thought this was the Cleanup?"

"That term is unofficial," said Morehouse primly. "Consolidation sounds more dignified. But yes, I'm sure it will be remembered by the people of this country as the Cleanup. Please continue, General Morgan."

"Getting back to the Luftwaffe, their morale is high and they're doing wonders with what we've been able to get for them to work with so far, but I don't have to tell you that any serious opposition to an American air strike is out of the question, and will be for some time. You can't bring down B-52s, Stealth bombers, Cruise missiles and F-35s with Cessnas, crop dusters, and weather channel copters. One of our top defense priorities has to be establishing some kind of air cover for our country."

"There is no way we can win an arms race with the Americans financially, in the air or in space," warned Ray Ridgeway. "We simply don't have the money. We will never be able to throw money away on bottomless defense contracting like the Americans do, spending millions and millions of credits to develop some fighter-bomber or missile system that will be obsolete in two years at best. We're going to have to rely on technological *innovation,* and not just in the military, but throughout every aspect of life and the economy in the Republic. Quality, not quantity. Brain, not brawn."

"Fortunately Aryan man has always been long on brains," Morehouse replied. "The Kriegsmarine?"

"About eight thousand hands so far," Morgan told them. "We have even less for them to sail than we have planes for the flyboys to fly. I had a long meeting with Admiral Hacker this morning, and he has developed a short-term plan for slapping together a navy for us. Sort of a navy, anyway. Again, all our craft are commandeered from abandoned enemy property, Jews' yachts and drug dealers' speedboats and such, or other vessels that were simply abandoned when their owners fled the country. Hacker is concentrating on light stuff, anything we can convert into torpedo patrol boats, missile assault vessels and gunboats. These will at least get our naval ensign out on the ocean where it can be seen

from the shore, although once again, resisting any full-scale naval attack from the Americans isn't in the cards right now."

"We won't have a proper blue water fleet for many years," said Bresler, shaking his head sadly.

"Afraid not," concurred Morgan. "Just coastal defense, and not too much of that at first. The KM is diddling around with some crude torpedoes and missiles that might be able to sink an enemy vessel if we can get close enough, and if they work, but we don't have the manufacturing capacity to produce anything in serious quantity. Right now, we're about like the Confederate navy trying to make submarines out of old boilers and mines out of beer barrels. Actually, we do have a couple of small submarines, for what they're worth. One we appropriated from the Oceanographic Research Unit of the University of Oregon, and another one we confiscated from Microsoft."

"What the hell was Microsoft Corporation doing with a submarine?" asked Frank Barrow in surprise.

"Apparently, Bill Gates bought it as a toy many years ago," replied Morgan. "When Gates OD'ed in the crapper, nobody knew what to do with it, and it got lost in the shuffle. We found it sitting in a dry dock shed on Lake Union. I don't see any real use for them. We don't even have anybody who knows how to sail them, although Hacker put two-man crews on each and told them to figure it out."

"Let's hope they don't end up drowning themselves like the first crew of the *Hunley*," said Morehouse. "I talked with Hacker myself down in the Convention bar the other day, and I agree with his plan. The Republic doesn't need a blue water fleet anyway at this juncture, just coastal defense to keep anybody from sailing right on in and landing whatever the hell they want on our coastline. How are you coming on Kriegsmarine uniforms?"

"When the Americans ran from the Puget Sound naval base in Everett, they left behind a whole warehouse full of sailors' blues," said Morgan. "We stamped the eagle over the right pocket and onto the caps, and there ya go. Class A and dress uniform issue to all ranks should be complete by the end of March."

"How about the land forces?" asked Barrow.

"Every Northwest soldier is now in uniform, although a few are still short some items on their dress kit, buttons and belt buckles and such. Small arms we're up to requirements on; about half the line units are toting M-16s and the other half are packing Kalashnikovs. Our Russian friends have been very generous with accessories and ammo."

"They want the full NDF contract," commented Barrow.

"They do indeed, but as grateful as we are to Big Bear, the Republic has to make our own weapons just like everything else, and as soon as possible," said Morehouse. "We can't be dependent on foreign sources for our armaments. We've taken over the Olympic Arms factory down the road here, and we will be producing our own small arms and ammo very soon. The larger ordnance is another problem. How are we doing on heavy weapons, General Morgan?"

"We've managed to acquire over a hundred modern artillery fieldpieces and fifty-six tanks, ranging from modern American vehicles like the Abrams Mark IV to an old Sherman we dragged out of a museum and re-activated," said Morgan. "Shells are a problem. I heard what you just said, Red, but we need to acquire overseas suppliers for all our heavy ordnance until such time as we can tool up our own arms industry. We now have over a hundred Strykers, and we're converting the old Kenworth truck plant in Tukwila to manufacture our own armored car modeled on the old British Saracen, more as an exercise in getting skilled people employed once again than anything else. I hate to be a prophet of doom, but we all have to realize that fighting the Americans as a guerrilla force back during the revolt was one thing. Then they couldn't find us, and we had no turf to defend. Now we do. As brave and proud as these NDF kids are, we can't stand up to the Americans in a head-on battle, and we won't be able to for years. We beat Partman because those assholes in Washington were running around like chickens with their heads cut off and they never backed him up, for which we can thank God. If the kikes had pulled themselves together in time when Partman did his little mutiny thang, they could have held on to Portland like the Allies held West Berlin, for as long as they wanted. We won that battle through pure audacity, but that won't always serve."

"You have a General Staff now, don't you, John?" asked Morehouse.

"More or less," confirmed Morgan.

"Okay, major permanent assignment: you and the best military minds we have need to put together a strategic plan for resisting an enemy invasion, most likely from the United States, but work on variations from Canada and this new Aztlan entity that looks to be set up soon in the Southwest, as well as all conceivable combinations thereof. Keep it updated all the time; it needs to be reviewed on the basis of every item of fresh intelligence we can get hold of at least once a month."

"Already on it," said Morgan. "We call it Plan One."

"Art, what's the status on the Civil Guard?" asked Barrow.

"Pretty much one hundred percent up and running, and in uniform," replied Justice Minister Arthur Flowers proudly. "All patrol cars and other Guard vehicles are now correctly painted and detailed, and the blue and red American siren lights have all been replaced with blue and green. There are now thirty-three thousand Guardsmen and—women, give or take, in over three hundred stations across the Republic. Mostly concentrated in the large urban areas, of course. About seventy percent of them are former American law enforcement officers who stayed on, and the rest have been drafted in from the NVA and NDF. We're making sure that almost all the senior personnel are Jerry Rebs, for obvious reasons."

"Are the two elements meshing okay?" Barrow wanted to know. "I can imagine how hard it must be to go in to work every day with people who were trying to kill you this time a year ago."

"It's a little tense in places, especially in the cities like Seattle and Portland and Spokane, where there was a lot of bloodshed on both sides during the war," Flowers told them. "But a lot of the old cops were always quietly sympathetic to begin with, and the rest who have stayed on are professionals. I see signs that things are getting ironed out. The real PC assholes and truly Unionist cops were all killed during the war, or else they got the hell out after Longview. The ones who can't forget the war, and who can't work for the new government on grounds of conscience, have mostly been honest about the fact and resigned. The ones who have stayed on are mostly the better elements, the real cops who are all about the job itself, and they really, *really* appreciate our

getting rid of the shitskinned minorities who caused ninety percent of the crime and the trouble under ZOG. For the first time in their careers, they're actually seeing crime get better and not constantly worse. There have been some personnel incidents in station houses, but we've handled them, almost always through transfer, and not always the ex-Union cops, either. Some of our guys still have some pretty big chips on their shoulders left over from the war as well," admitted Flowers. "It's not cool to walk into the break room on your first day on the job, and find some goon sitting there scarfing down donuts who beat the crap out of you with a phone book in high school for saying nigger."

"Those chips on men's shoulders are going to be there for years. We'll all have to learn to work around them," said Morehouse.

"How do the men feel about being disarmed on the street level?" asked Gary Bresler from Commerce and Industry.

"It's not absolutely certain yet that we're going to do that," Flowers reminded him. "The Convention hasn't ruled on it. But it's a fascinating concept—an unarmed police force for an armed society, where a cop has to command respect for the man he is and not just for his badge and his gun. A surprising number of Guardsmen are in favor of it."

"Walter, how go our foreign affairs?" said Morehouse, turning to the former American Secretary of State. "Or do we have any yet?"

"Not many. So far the only foreign country that has granted us full recognition, complete with exchange of ambassadors, is Russia, but that's probably the best one to have right now," reported Stanhope. "Not just for what they can do for us, but because other developed nations figure if Big Bear is in here foraging for goodies, then they'd better be here, too. A lot of other countries are going to get nervous at the prospect of the Russians getting a monopoly on our timber and pulp, our minerals, our future grain production, our produce, and our markets. The Northwest Republic is going to be a food-producing nation with a hard-working white population, and those are getting fewer and more far between as world capitalism continues its decline. We are probably going to find ourselves in the same ironic position that Rhodesia and South Africa once faced, in that we will be feeding the very people who are trying to destroy us."

Stanhope went on: "The wealthy businessmen and multinational corporations who really run the world are not stupid, comrades, and they understand that once we get our act together, the Republic is going to be a major world power. We will come through with an efficient and productive economy, a well educated and racially homogenous population, a *young* population, and we will have the ability to make and to implement decisions free of the kind of strangling government red tape that afflicts everywhere else in the Western liberal and social democracies. Other countries won't be able to admit the fact in public for fear of the Jews and liberals, but they will all want a piece of our pie, if only to prevent Big Bear from getting all of it. As per usual, the European Union wants to have its cake and eat it too. While their politicians are screaming hatred at us from every podium, all kinds of corporate and big business movers and shakers from Europe are easing their bods over here on scouting trips, pretending to represent private corporate interests, or come here for the skiing in Sandpoint, or whatever. Then when they get back, they're reporting to their respective governments, and the EU in Brussels itself as to whether or not they think we're going to make it. Once they're convinced the Republic will be around for a while, they'll want to do business, especially since the Third World markets they've relied on for a generation have now collapsed completely or else been taken over by the Chinese."

"And how do the ching-ling-dings feel about us?" asked Morgan.

"The Russians got here first, they don't like the Russians, and in any case we can't have anything to do with them for racial reasons," said Stanhope. "Russia now has a foothold in North America, as they view it, so the Chinese will back Aztlan so they can get one, too. Actually, they were playing the beaner card long before we came along. Where do you think most of the funding for Frente de la Raza has been coming from for at least the last ten years? My guess is that we will end up with a hostile Aztlan on our southern border which is not only mestizo, but a Chinese client state."

"Canada?" asked Morehouse.

"Always the most Judaized of all the Western democracies," said Stanhope. "Even more so than the United States, if you can imagine that. The Canadian government has always been virtually a colony

of Tel Aviv. They regard us with horror and loathing, but so far as we know, no one in Ottawa is nuts enough to try physical force. Our army is already a lot larger than theirs. We bloodied them badly in British Columbia and Alberta during the war, and they know full well that all the NVA cells didn't move south after Longview. For all their swaggering and their mouth, Ottawa doesn't want the guerrilla war starting up again."

"A lot of Canucks want to do just that, including my own wife," said Barrow. "Jane hides it well, but she's damned bitter about the way we sold out the Canadian West at Longview, and she has every right to be. If the NVA ever starts rolling again through the Great White North, she's made it clear that she's going back, and as terrible as that would be for me, I wouldn't have the right to stop her. We betrayed our Canadian comrades at Longview, and it still tastes bad in my mouth."

"What the hell could we do, Frank?" asked Stanhope sympathetically. "You remember how it was, and I saw it from the American side. The Canadian government simply wouldn't talk to us. They wouldn't even send an observer. They hung tough and laid all the weight for the loss of the Northwest on Chelsea Clinton's shoulders, and they reaped their reward. That's why the Canadian regime is now the absolute darling of world Jewry. The kikes can't do enough for those thieves and bugger boys in Ottawa these days. You got all you could get at Longview, Frank, you got the Republic. I think Jane understands that. Right now the Canadian government officially pretends that we don't exist, and we think that solipsistic approach will continue for a while, at least until they get their orders from Israel."

"But will Israel itself last much longer?" asked DeMarco.

"Intelligence reports tell us that the Muslim nations are beginning to muster their forces for the final effort to drive the American occupation troops from their lands, and overrun Israel while they're at it," said Stanhope. "They may well be successful, but whether they are or not, it's going to be a bloodbath, and in very short order the United States will have far more on their plates than us alone. That's why we—they, I should say—that was the reason that the U.S.A. agreed to Longview at all, knowing even as they went in that the result wasn't going to be an optimal one from their point of view. But you and the Political

Bureau were right on that one, Red. The most we on the American side came to Longview hoping to get was a white Puerto Rico and no nationalizing of American corporate assets."

"That's the biggie," said Morehouse. "How fare our former lords and masters in La Cesspool Grande?"

"Right now everybody is screaming for Chelsea's head, of course. The liberal wing of the Democratic Party and the neocon wing of the Republicans co-sponsored the impeachment resolution. Everyone figured that the Sea Hag would simply get them all to back off, since the Treaty was signed on her orders and not Chelsea's. For a time last month it looked like Hillary had decided the heat was too great and she'd made a mistake, and she was trying to walk it back and maybe even resume the war on some pretext, but in view of the, uh, incident in Denver, Hillary is now removed from the scene." He looked at Barrow suggestively.

"That wasn't meant to be so messy," said Barrow. "We sent in two of Charlie Randall's best operatives, both foreigners to try and divert suspicion. They were posing as a waiter and a bellhop in the Denver Hilton. One of them was a Serb and one of them was a white African. It turns out that both of them had issues with Hillary due to what was done to their own homelands in the past, and when they extracted her from the conference and got her alone up in the bridal suite, it got personal. We're pushing a disinformation program to blame the episode on disaffected elements in the United States establishment. It may have some effect over time, but right now, nobody's buying it. That slaughterhouse in the hotel room had NVA written all over it. Everybody assumes we somehow got O.C. Oglevy into the hotel undercover."

"I'm surprised the Americans haven't called for a full-scale war over it," said James Salvatore from Interior, shaking his head.

"Hillary Clinton had so many enemies in the American establishment by now that most of Capitol Hill and Wall Street were clinking champagne glasses together when they heard the news," said Stanhope. "Discreetly, of course. I've already had contacts from former associates of mine in Washington offering money, information and cooperation to the Republic out of pure gratitude, as well as veiled suggestions as to

who should be next on our hit list. That's an interesting possibility for us. If there are elements in Western governments willing to exchange favors for removing their internal political and commercial enemies, we might be able to develop a lucrative little cottage industry as hitmen."

"Hey, it's what we do," said Barrow with a shrug.

"Will Chelsea be able to make it past impeachment without Mommy Dearest?" asked Morehouse.

"She now has a tremendous sympathy vote going for her, of course, over the tragic loss of her sainted mother," said Stanhope. "Old man Bill's brain burned out long ago from the coke and the booze and the syphilis, and all he does is wander the White House corridors in an old bathrobe with a Secret Service man in tow, exposing himself every now and then to the secretaries and the female staff. But if Chelsea cleans him up nice and rolls him out in a wheelchair before Congress, she can maybe rally enough sympathy and nostalgia for the Auld Lang Syne of the Nineties to beat the impeachment. She'll be a lame duck for the rest of her term, but a lame duck is what we want."

"We're having WPB work up some plans to take out the major driving people behind impeachment if it looks like it might succeed," said Barrow.

"What's WPB?" asked Dr. Paul Hassling.

"The latest in our own alphabet soup. Used to be Third Section," explained Barrow. "The old NVA Threesec has now split into two sections. There's BOSS, the Bureau of State Security, which is responsible for counter-intelligence and internal security within the Republic. That's Dangerous Dan's outfit, or the McGrew Crew as they call themselves. Then there's Charlie Randall's WPB, the War Prevention Bureau, which is responsible for foreign operations and intelligence. Both report to me and through me to the State President, with oversight from the parliamentary security committee."

"So it's going to be Parliament for sure and not the National Convention?" asked Fiona Bonnar.

"Looks that way, yes," replied Barrow.

"Frank, how is Force 101 doing?" asked Morehouse.

Barrow consulted his own notes. "We've made an estimated forty thousand apprehensions and terminations so far, the overwhelming

majority of them in the top six urban areas of the Republic," he told them. "About a thousand of the more egregious and publicly notorious cases have been tried before court-martials. The prisoners were condemned and hanged within twenty-four hours. Most of them, anyway. For public relations purposes, we made sure there have been some acquittals as well, over a hundred so far, all sad sacks or people who genuinely got caught up in an impossible situation. The prisoners who have been openly hanged are mostly well-known informers from the War of Independence, and white people of both genders who are widely known to have committed public bestiality and perversion in the past. Their misbehavior was public, to the point where their punishment needs to be public as well."

"White women sleeping with niggers?" asked Fiona Bonnar with distaste in her voice.

"Yes, ma'am, I'm sorry to say so," said Barrow. "Public reaction has been uniformly favorable, and not just because all the liberals have run away. Back in the old days, every decent person who saw some monkoid walking down the street with his arm around a white girl always got a sick feeling somewhere inside. There have been cases where some of these wretched women were turned over to the tribunals by their own relatives."

"How public?" asked Bresler. "I don't recall seeing any televised hangings on the news. I think I'd remember."

Barrow shook his head. "Again for public relations purposes, the executions are carried out in private without television cameras. Everyone already knows we kill people, and we don't want to provide enemy propaganda with multiple images of dangling bodies that they can use against us in their own anti-NAR propaganda. The Iranians did that, and it gave a field day to their external enemies. Those trials are a matter of public record. The rest of the proscribed individuals who have been apprehended have been hanged in private and without publicity. As per the protocols we established, no written records are being kept. We have apprehended virtually none of the big fish on our lists, and now that the word is getting out, we're finding fewer and fewer of the smaller ones. Like the Jews did in World War Two when they heard the Germans were coming, the Jews of today and their liberal friends have

hooked up and booked when the reckoning came due. The ones we are capturing and disposing of are mostly a bunch of hapless race-mixers, sexual deviates, drug addicts and petty informers, none of whom seem to have had the sense to realize who they're dealing with. Sometimes the price of stupidity is extinction, as our own race almost found out the hard way."

"How are the men in Force 101 holding up?" asked Stanhope.

"Leach says no problem. We found that once we actually started fighting instead of tapping on computer keyboards, we've always had those who are willing to go the extra mile for us in such matters, mostly men whose wives or daughters fell into the hands of monkoids or muds, or who served time in the Zionist prisons for the hatecrime of saying a forbidden word or upsetting some politically protected minority. There are some Mandingo women on the force as well, although I have to admit, I still have qualms about that. As hardened as most of them are from the war and their own private demons, sometimes a man simply can't handle seeing one more hysterical, weeping girl with a rope around her neck. When that happens, he goes to his CO and says he wants out, and he is reassigned immediately. No questions asked, no remarks passed, nothing negative on his record. Very few Force 101 guys have taken advantage of that policy. Once the force is disbanded, everybody swears on the Official Secrets Act, they move on with their lives, and it's never to be spoken of again."

"Body disposal?" asked Morehouse.

"Force 101 has commandeered about a dozen large and isolated hog farms around the country and staffed them with special complements, all male. What the swine don't dispose of is gathered up and processed into fertilizer, bagged, and turned over to the Ministry of Agriculture. These idiots wanted to stay here in this land despite what they've done, so we give them their wish. We return them to the earth from which they sprang."

"What of administrative follow-up?" asked Andrei Stepanov, his English still somewhat Russian-accented even after all his years spent living in the Pacific Northwest.

"The Bureau of State Security is now employing over a thousand clerks and computer personnel to track down and identify, and where

possible to eliminate all record of these unpersons," said Barrow. "This will be an ongoing project for many years, but eventually we hope we will be able effectively to remove all trace of them and their vileness from the official record, and leave that much less for future enemy propagandists to go on. Our computer geeks are going after any server outside the country that needs to be targeted for this purpose. To save time and also just for the hell of it, they're not messing around with viruses. Mostly they're re-formatting the servers at long range, and wiping the whole thing clean, which has the added benefit of fucking up the American infrastructure even more than it is already."

"Good," said Morehouse with an approving nod. "We need to keep them off balance and dithering, so they can't get organized and work out a cohesive response to The Cataclysm, as the liberals are calling it on their blogs nowadays."

"A lot of those blogs are disappearing as well," Barrow told them. "Purging written records, newspaper archives, and other hard copy stuff is a lot more difficult. It will be a very long term project indeed, especially outside the country. It has to be done, though. These people were and are human garbage, they deserve only oblivion, and as far as we can prevent it, nobody is going to come along later and make heroes out of them. If we get this part right, there will be no one coming up with some Northwest version of *The Diary of Anne Frank*."

"God, I hope not," said Morehouse with a sigh. "Ray, how's the Republic's bank balance doing?"

"We have over twenty-four billion dollars in cash assets under state control, and there's at least twice that much in private hands throughout the Republic," said Ridgeway. "Plus the value of the real estate confiscated from the enemy and from Runaways, which is almost beyond computing. That sounds like a lot of money, but when you're trying to run a modern state, it's amazing how quickly you burn up the cash. As I said at the beginning, we have come into a huge inheritance, but we have to be thrifty and conserve it, since it may be some time before we can work out a revenue system."

"What developments on that front?" asked Bresler from Commerce and Industry. "A lot of business people in the Northwest want to know

what kind of taxes they're going to be expected to pay, and they're asking me."

"The Northwest Constitution forbids both income tax and taxing homesteads," said Ridgeway. "The debate on taxing commercial property is still raging in the Convention. On the one side, some say that it's a form of feudalism and it means that no one ever actually owns any real property if they have to pay an annual tribute to the state for it. On the other hand, the more pragmatic say we have to raise money somehow and we have to tax *something.* A definite small business lobby is developing in the Convention, which I suppose is understandable considering the way small businesses were treated under the United States. We've reached agreement on things like the Republic's right to charge customs and excise duties on imported products, especially luxury goods, but as to business and business property taxes, it's still up in the air. How's the Great Weed Debate going out there of late, Red?"

"About two-thirds pragmatists who say grow it, sell it, and tax it like booze, and one-third BCs who rant and rave about hippy-dippy whigger degenerates smokin' dat mary-jah-wanna and coming after their demure daughters with lust in their drug-crazed eyes," replied Morehouse wearily. "I think it will pass. Hell, I shouldn't complain. It keeps them off religion."

"Red, the Treasury can sure as hell use that revenue stream," said Ridgeway. "Not to mention the export possibilities."

"Then the rest of the world will call us a nation of drug dealers," pointed out Jim Salvatore.

"They're going to call us all kinds of things anyway," said Ridgeway. "It's not as if *anything* we do will ever win the world's approval, so we might as well do what's in our own best interests, and the rest of the world can go commit an unnatural act on themselves."

"What are BCs?" asked Fiona Bonnar.

"A slang term that's come up of late," explained Morehouse. "It means Beaver Cleavers, or possibly Buzz Cuts, from the old American military hairdo that used to be taken as a kind of statement of conservatism. There's a significant minority among us who, in defiance of all logic

and reality, still believe even after all that has happened, that somehow it's possible to turn back the clock and return to the 1950s."

"Now we have state power, something of kind might be done, Comrade Vice President," said Andrei Stepanov. "Not time machine, to be sure, but better aspects of past eras can be resurrected, like cloning of dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*. With state power, extinction is no longer for always. The Ministry of Culture is already discussing it. There is nothing at all wrong with old-fashioned standards of morality and decency. It was when those began to fall under the Jewish propaganda onslaught that the situation in the West first began seriously to deteriorate. But this will be long process, for we must raise an entire generation of white children in the old way, the new old way I should say, and even then it can never be exact duplicate of past."

"Yeah, backlash never replays like the original," said Morgan, nodding in agreement.

"Getting back to money matters, how's the new currency coming, Ray?" asked Morehouse.

"Glad you asked," said Ridgeway. "I have here the first proofs of the bank note designs for you to look over." From his briefcase, Ridgeway removed a sheaf of bright color photocopies. "Pass these around, please, comrades. These are artists' renditions of the proposed five, ten, twenty, and fifty-credit notes to be issued by the State Bank of the NAR."

"It's definitely going to be credits?" asked James Salvatore. "Not pounds and shillings and pence?"

"That was never a realistic proposal," said Ridgeway. "That's part of the problem with staging a revolution with people, some of whom are eccentric scholarly types. We had one individual on the currency committee who wanted us to use ducats."

"What on earth is a ducat?" asked Art Flowers.

"I'm not exactly sure myself," Ridgeway admitted.

"No hundreds?" asked Farmer Brown, holding the copies up. His left palm was scarred from a bullet wound he had taken during the July Days, as the period of confused skirmishing just after the announcement of the Longview peace conference by American President Chelsea Clinton was coming to be called.

"No, we hope that we can hold down inflation to the point where no one needs a hundred-credit note for everyday use," said Ridgeway. He pulled a manila envelope from his briefcase and rattled some coins out on the table. "These are first casts of proposed one-credit and two-credit coins, a fifty-cent piece, a twenty-five-cent piece, a ten-cent piece, a two-cent piece, and a penny. You will note they are all larger than American coins, so they will make a satisfying clink in the pocket. That may sound silly, but psychology is very important in maintaining confidence in a currency. For the same reason, you will notice the bank notes are larger than American dollars or that puny euro. If your money is larger, you feel like you have more of it. Recent American coinage is the smallest in the world; it's like having a pocket full of bird seed. The two-credit coin is composed of twenty-five percent gold alloy and the one-credit coin is half silver and half nickel, so these coins have intrinsic worth, although with the insane fluctuations on the markets these days I couldn't tell you how much each piece is worth in U.S. dollars. The lesser pieces are copper, and the penny is brass. We also have larger denomination gold and platinum coins on the drawing board, up to fifty credits."

"I thought some of the die-hards on the committee wanted no paper money at all?" commented Joe Jennings.

Ridgeway nodded. "Yes, and that was a bit of a sell, but we're going to be very short on precious metals for coinage, and human nature being what it is, once we come out with any gold and silver coinage at all there's bound to be hoarding. We have to make sure there's enough actual, physical money in circulation to keep our economy going."

"That's Bob Mathews on the one-credit coin?" asked Fiona Bonnar, holding it up to the light.

"Yes," said Ridgeway. "Each coin has heads and tails. The two-credit coin has two heads, actually, Lewis and Clark in overlapping profile, and a depiction of the Astoria bridge on the reverse for the place where they wintered in 1805. David Lane's on the fifty-cent piece, Vicky Weaver's on the quarter, Gordon Kahl is on the dime, Kathy Ainsworth is on the nickel, Jesse Lockhart is on the tuppence, and Adolf Hitler is on the penny. The tails are mostly depictions of Northwest animals, as you can see. A bear, a wolf, an eagle, a salmon, and a moose,

but the penny has the seal of the Republic on it and the bridge is on the two-credit coin, like I said. On the bills, that's Melanie Young on the five-credit note . . ."

"It's pink!" said Fiona Bonnar with a scowl. "Mel Young of all women didn't wear pink, I assure you!"

"The colors are just suggestions, comrade," Ridgeway told her. "All of these designs will be submitted to the Convention for full debate and approval, of course. The green ten-credit note shows Pastor Richard Butler, the blue twenty-credit bill depicts George Lincoln Rockwell, and the brown and purple fifty shows Gus Singer and his family, who were murdered on 10/22 by the FBI and It Takes a Village, and whose deaths precipitated the War of Independence. That engraving was made from one of their family photographs found in the burned-out ruins of the Singer home in Coeur d'Alene. The reverse views on the bills show Northwest scenic views—Mount Rainier, Glacier National Park, Multnomah Falls, and Cannon Beach. Some of us didn't want to put serial numbers on the bills, but that has to be, as a prevention against counterfeiting."

"You're bringing these to the Convention floor?" asked Morehouse.

"Brian is going to introduce them tomorrow," said Ridgeway.

"Still looking for a six-month switchover?" inquired Dr. Hassling.

"Yes," confirmed Ridgeway. "From July the first, both currencies will be legal tender within the Republic, but the State Bank and the government will slowly bleed down the Federal Reserve notes by retaining them and paying out all cash and check disbursements in Northwest credits instead of dollars, one for one. On New Year's Day of next year, we go over completely, and the U.S. dollar will no longer be legal tender. There will be a black market in dollars for many years, of course, and we're just going to have to accept this. It's going to take time for people to gain confidence in the Republic and the Republic's money."

"Joe, how are we coming along on unhooking from the internet?" asked Morehouse.

"Getting there. The government and essential functions, anyway. It's vital that the Northwest Republic reverse the dependence on computers to perform every task, which has become the main feature

of Western commerce and government over the past five decades," said Jennings. "Back under the ZOG régime, whenever there was an extended power failure and everybody's computers went down, there was no provision for doing anything manually, and nobody knew how to do most things offline even if there had been. There have already been a number of serious virus attacks made against computer networks here in the Republic, some of them from Israel, but others from within the United States. Those cyber-attacks may or may not have had the approval and assistance of the American authorities. The problem is that it's hard to undo the habits of a lifetime," Jennings went on. "Do you know there are office workers in the Northwest who have no idea what a filing cabinet even is? Almost all of our departments are taking over from bodies that existed under the United States, and everybody from Security to Finance needs to take possession and access records that are computerized and therefore vulnerable to destruction by cyber-attack. At the very least we need to construct self-contained intranets for our government that have no connection to the world wide web. That way, we only need to worry about actual spies getting access to a terminal and uploading a virus off a portable flash drive or similar device, although even that's too risky to my mind."

"So what are you doing about it?" asked Barrow.

"I'm sure most of you have met our de-computerization advisors in your own departments?" asked Jennings. There were groans and muttering around the table. "Yes, I know, they're irritating, but this has to be done, comrades. You think they're just throwing monkey wrenches and making more work for you, but if you take the easy way out and fall back on that cyber-crutch, you will come in one morning and find everything you've accomplished since Longview fried to a crisp by some Israeli worm. The clack clack clack of the typewriter, the click click of the manual calculator, and the rumble and thump of filing cabinet drawers must be heard once more in the land, my friends. Besides, admin workers need to learn to start *thinking* about what they're doing again, not just letting the computer do it for them, and doing whatever the computer tells them to do."

"How about internet access from the Republic to the worldwide web as a whole?" asked Salvatore.

"We have control of the major hubs and our guys are working on installing all kinds of firewalls and anti-virus protection at the hubs, but some malware will still get through," said Jennings. "We have to make sure that no system we absolutely need to have up and running all the time has any outside access at all, and that's going to take a while to implement. Cell phones and cell relay towers are especially vulnerable."

"Gary, you're up," said Morehouse. "How is our manufacturing capacity shaping up?"

"Well, I've got some bad news, some good news, and some very good news," Bresler told them.

"Very good news sounds very good," said Stepanov.

"The very good news is that even if everything else goes south, we'll be able to drown our sorrows," said Bresler. "We've got dozens of microbreweries and wineries all over Oregon and Washington, almost all of which are intact, and in most cases the operators and staff have stuck around, if only so as not to be out their investment. Land and plant is a lot harder to run away from than a government check and a McMansion. A couple of wineries have small distilleries attached to make brandy out of their own product, and they've indicated interest in expanding that aspect of their businesses now they have a captive market, so to speak. Plus there's a lot of export potential. We make some really good brew and hooch up here in the Northland. You can always find a market somewhere for anything that will get people plastered, be it Northwest wine, Northwest beer, or Northwest pot. There's another potential revenue stream for you, Ray."

"That's nice for the drunks and the stoners, but what about heavy industry?" asked Morehouse.

"That's the merely good news. We're in better shape than we thought possible a few months ago," Bresler told them. "There used to be a fair amount of industry in the Northwest before globalization set in, and America as a whole stopped manufacturing and shipped all the jobs out to China and Guatemala. In many cases, nobody wanted the factories to convert to yuppie condos or boutiques, and so the plants were just mothballed and forgotten about. My department has so far identified over a thousand manufacturing facilities which, in

our opinion, could be re-commissioned and put back into production, either with their original products or else re-tooled for other stuff. Everything from shoes and electronic circuit boards to automotive engines and chemicals. These were mostly small plants, true, but then we're not trying to break into world markets or supply the entire North American continent with widgets or whatever, just keep the Northwest Republic going in a completely self-contained economy."

"Do we have any steel production at all?" asked Morehouse.

"Well, yeah, we're producing our own steel now, just not exactly making it," explained Bresler.

"Say again?" asked Morgan.

"Recycling. There are now smelting and re-fabrication mills going in Idaho Falls, Spokane, Bellingham, several in Seattle and Portland, and one in The Dalles. We have thousands of Labor Service people digging through old American landfills, junk yards, auto graveyards, so forth and so on and salvaging everything metal from tin and aluminum cans to junked Gremlins and Priuses. We're shipping it to these plants I mentioned, where they are melting it all down and re-fabricating it into steel and iron pipe, steel and iron construction rebar, or making simple ingots of tin and aluminum and lengths of steel bar for whenever we can get a proper production system set up. More good news is that this source will last us for years. The number of old and new landfills in the Northwest and the riches that can be harvested from them seems to be damned near limitless. Until you look at what they throw away, you can't begin to understand what a fantastically *wasteful* society the United States of America is. Was, I should say. I tell you that properly extracted and utilized, we have a supply of raw industrial metal in those dumps that will last us ten years. We're also working on a plant in Puyallup to melt down and reprocess plastic, and once that gets up and running, our supply of raw material from the landfills will be virtually bottomless. We will be able to manufacture all our plastic needs, especially when we eliminate plastic beverage receptacles and go back to the old system of glass deposit bottles, for everything from ginger ale and beer to cooking oil and Worcestershire sauce."

"And now for the bad news you mentioned?" asked Barrow.

"Paul's department," said Bresler. "Energy. The energy problem is crucial for industrial reconstruction as well as every damned thing else. Our coal-burning power stations are running way low, and we have lost all our nuclear capacity. That's the one thing the Americans did efficiently after Longview. Apparently, they already had protocols in place for removing the fuel rods and scuttling the reactors on all our nuclear power plants, draining the heavy water and the cooling towers, so forth and so on. It makes you wonder how long they knew that Northwest independence was coming."

"Paul?" asked Morehouse.

"He's right," spoke up Dr. Paul Hassling. "The fuel rods have been completely removed from Hanford and from the Columbia River reactors. Prescot in Oregon, the Idaho Falls light water reactor and the Idaho National Engineering Laboratory reactor, the Medford plant, all of them are now shut down. Those plants are useless until we can convert them to coal or methane, and that's going to be a five-star bitch, technically and financially. I gave Ray here some estimates a while back, and I thought he was going to have a coronary."

"It can be done, Red," Ridgeway told them glumly, "But it's going to put a major hole in our inheritance that I really wish we could spend elsewhere, especially on military uses."

"What are we doing about it?" asked Morehouse.

"Transferring as much of the grid as we can to coal and diesel generating stations, but we're dangerously overloaded," replied Hassling. "I'm busting our butts trying to up the capacity on water-power turbines along the Columbia, and we're trying to get those silly windmill things down on the coast working again, but that's not much good in the short term. Seattle and Portland and Spokane are still experiencing rolling brownouts. I have been assigned over twenty-thousand Labor Service personnel to obtain alternative fuel sources for electrical power generation, which is a fancy way of saying find anything that will burn instead of coal or diesel fuel, but it's all makeshift. It's crude and clumsy as hell, and we can't keep it up for too long. We're paying private lumber crews for wood, of course, but we're also going through former ghetto and non-white housing areas in Portland and Seattle and other urban areas where the cockroaches used to nest. We're tearing

down any housing units that appear to have been rendered hopelessly beyond repair or renovation, which is most everything that niggers or beaners lived in, and we're reducing all the wood to burnable chunks with trash compactors and chain saws. Then we ship it out by rail or truck to the power plants. Thankfully, most Northwest generating plants have rail connections we've been able to repair and refurbish, because they were built back in the days before Amurrica destroyed her railroads at the behest of the Mob-ruled Teamsters Union and the big oil companies. We can keep the coal-fired stations going for a while by burning nigger shacks, and also by burning hundreds of thousands of Jew and liberal books and magazines the Culture Ministry is cleaning out of the libraries and bookstores, plus the accumulated paper records and computer printouts of state and federal government for the past hundred years that we keep finding by the warehouse-full. But the diesel-powered stations are another matter. I have to tell you, gentlemen . . ."

"And lady," broke in Fiona Bonnar.

"And lady," Hassling went on with a bow, "I have to tell you that we now have only a week's supply of diesel fuel left in the entire Republic, almost all of which has to go to the power stations. There are certain substitutes we can use, and I've already got some diesel stations running on everything from kerosene to cooking oil, but we still need the real stuff, a lot of it. The trucks that still transport almost all of our goods are falling idle. Gasoline is almost as badly in short supply. It's true that diesel engines can run on other fuels, but even raiding all the Republic's greasy spoons isn't going to supply enough to replace the real McCoy."

"Alternative sources?" asked Morehouse. "I mean besides draining the cafeteria's French fry cooker?"

"Dr. Joseph Cord's new Northwest Institute of Technology on the University of Washington campus is working full speed on developing a protocol for converting diesel generators to methane and alcohol, as well as various forms of substitute diesel fuel, anything that might work. Last week three small fuel alcohol plants went into production in Tacoma, McMinnville, and Spokane. The two on the coast are processing corn, and the one in Spokane uses potatoes. The same hog farms that Force

101 is using for refuse disposal are collecting the guano and beginning methane production in a small way, but none of these solutions are going to come on line within the next week. The energy problem has to be addressed *now.* Somehow we *must* get fuel imports from the United States and Canada resumed, or else in a month's time we really will be driving horses and buggies and working by candlelight."

Morehouse looked at his watch, "That is the subject of our conference call, and it's time," he said. He leaned over to Barrow. "Frank, are Colonel Randall and his team in place?" he asked in a low voice.

"That's affirmative. I just got the text a few minutes ago," said Barrow. "He has been briefed on the nature and purpose of his mission, but bear in mind he's going to have to play it by ear as to deciding when and how to proceed."

Morehouse touched a button under the table, and the curtains at one end of the room opened to reveal a huge plasma screen connected to a satellite uplink. A little light popped on in the upper right-hand corner, and digital lettering appeared on the screen. It read *60 seconds to conference. 59 seconds to conference, 58 seconds . . . .* Morehouse chuckled. "I understand that the last time this system was used was when Chelsea Clinton informed the assembled state government of Washington that the United States of America now considered them to be expendable, and that Jerry Reb was coming for them."

"I woulda loved to've been a fly on the wall at that bit of must-see TV," laughed John Corbett Morgan.

"It got pretty hysterical," said Morehouse reminiscently. "The speaker of the state Senate shot himself in the chair you're sitting in, James. We found blood splatters and a bullet hole on the wall behind you." The screen suddenly split into six squares, each one showing the face of a man in a business suit sitting behind a desk. The split screen was reproduced on two smaller monitors in the center of the ministerial conference table, and below each face was a name and title. The cabinet had been briefed in detail on each of these men and what his particular problem was with the Northwest Republic.

Aaron Levy, CEO, Foodway Stores in Albany, New York, was a plump-faced Jew whose quivering jowls and bulging eyes indicated he

was in a high state of agitation as he stared at the mortal enemies of his race.

Sir Reginald Shaw, Chairman, Anglo-Standard Petroleum, appearing from London, was merely a toffee-nosed British git who found the whole racism thing uncouth—("not the done thing, don't y'know?") and who considered the Northwesters to be bad hats and bad credit risks. ("Terrorists, rum lot of chaps, don't y'know? Can't do business with 'em, of course.")

Malcolm Dale Henderson, Chairman, United Parcel Express, headquartered in Indianapolis, Indiana, was a blank-faced multi-millionaire about 60 years of age, who was married to a former Miss Mexico as his third trophy wife and whose white son by his first marriage had been a Marine Corps captain who was killed in the battle of Portland.

William Robert "Billy Bob" Wiggins, Chairman, Associated American Petroleum Products, was a billionaire from Houston and a rabid Christian Zionist who sported a white ten-gallon hat even on video conference calls like this one. They could see the small stand on his desk bearing miniature flags of the U.S.A., the Lone Star state flag of Texas, and Israel.

Michael Perlman, CEO, Continental Foods out of Los Angeles, was a small Jewish man with frizzy, black, almost negroid hair, liver lips and a nose that looked like a deformed mushroom. His eyes were literally rolling behind the thick lenses of his spectacles.

Oliver Lodge, President of North American Consolidated Industries and also President of the American Business Association, was sitting in from Haverhill, Massachusetts. He was a quiet and expensively dressed man of about 50 who had been an American delegate to the Longview peace conference.

"Good afternoon, gentlemen," said Morehouse. "I am Henry Morehouse, Vice President of the Northwest American Republic and Speaker of the Northwest Constitutional Convention. These comrades assembled here with me are the Council of Ministers of the Northwest Republic, what most countries refer to as the cabinet. I won't introduce them all individually, although you may know some of them from the news media. I know Mr. Lodge recognizes General Barrow and General Morgan from Longview."

"I do indeed remember General Barrow from many lengthy sessions," said Lodge. "I also recognize my former colleague Mr. Stanhope, who regretfully turned out to be a traitor to his country."

"I found that I could no longer serve both my country and basic human decency, and I made my choice," said Stanhope evenly. "I'm sorry if I have thereby forfeited your respect and your friendship, Oliver, but I knew the price of that choice beforehand."

"No buyer's remorse, Walter?" queried Lodge archly.

"None," said Stanhope firmly.

Lodge went on. "If memory serves, when last I saw General Morgan, he was jamming the barrel of a rather large revolver down Senator Howard Weintraub's throat on the floor of the Longview conference room, while that remarkable young woman you call Nightshade was holding a switchblade to Jeanette Galinsky's throat. A very proactive style of diplomacy, and fascinating to watch. [See *A Mighty Fortress* by the author.] I presume your cabinet are all of the same school of international relations?"

"You would be correct in that assumption," said Morehouse.

"Then I suppose we're fortunate not to be in the same room with you," said Lodge. "I understand why these other five gentlemen are participating, since as I could have predicted at Longview, your new republic is experiencing difficulty with your food and energy imports. But why am I being honored with inclusion in this minor historical event?"

"Your word carries weight in the business and economic world, Mr. Lodge, and you have personal experience with us," said Barrow. "You can assure others as needed that we say what we mean, and we mean what we say. At present we have no need to deal with any of your concerns directly, but that may change, and you know almost all the people we will need to do business with."

"You're not doing business with any of us, you *goyische gonavim!*" shouted Michael Perlman in fury.

"Certainly not with any Jewish firm, and I don't have to tell you, that's a lot of companies!" snapped Aaron Levy. "What, are you *meshugah*? Any Jew do business with you Nazi murderers! You vant I

should spit right on dis video lens? You vant?" Levy suited the action to the word.

"You have laid violent hands on the Apple of God's Eye," rumbled the Texan Wiggins sternly.

"Your people killed my son," said Henderson.

"And your people murdered my wife, but I'm sitting here talking to you, because it has to be done," Morgan told him steadily.

"There is also a legal problem, Mr. Vice President," began Lodge.

"Don't call him that!" shouted Perlman from Los Angeles. "He is Vice President of nothing! *Nothing!*"

"I don't think wishful thinking is the way to go here, Mr. Perlman," said Lodge. "We need to accept what is, and to my never-ending astonishment, it turns out that this is the way things are. As I was saying, Mr. Morehouse, there is a legal issue as well. The Department of Commerce has already prohibited any dealings with the territory now under your control, and as soon as we can figure out who will be President in a few months' time and therefore who signs the laws, Congress will be imposing some of the most stringent economic sanctions in world history on the Northwest. You can't ask us to disobey the law."

"Tyrants are always the law, Mr. Lodge," spoke up Gary Bresler. "That is what makes them different from common or garden variety gangsters."

"Like you?" sneered Levy.

"It is only because we chose to defy the oppressor's law that we regained our freedom," said Morehouse levelly. "Mr. Lodge, if you're talking about ethics, pardon me if I'm not too impressed with multinational corporations' history of strict legality and obedience to the laws of the countries wherein they operate. Let's get down to brass tacks. We are moving full speed ahead in this new country of ours to create a completely self-contained economy wherein we grow or manufacture everything we need from automobiles to weapons, on through clothing, shoes, tools, and down to pancake mix, candy canes for Christmas, and some of the best beer you'll ever drink, which actually we've already got. Eventually, your sanctions will be a dead letter, but that time is not now. Right now we need some things that

we can only get from elsewhere, and until we can establish trading relationships with other countries throughout the world, that means doing business with American corporations.

"Specifically we need three things. We need drugs and medical supplies, including parts for medical equipment in our hospitals. We need energy, especially gasoline and even more urgently, diesel fuel to run our electric power stations. Finally we need food. Meat and agricultural produce we can supply on our own, from our own land. The Northwest is a breadbasket, but for the next few years until we get ourselves sorted out, we will need staples like rice, beans, canned goods, sugar, flour, coffee and tea, salt, that kind of thing. We need Sir Reginald and Mr. Wiggins and all the companies under their control to resume tanker and pipeline shipments of fuel to gas stations and other end users here. We need that right away, as in today. We need Mr. Levy and Mr. Perlman to resume shipment of certain basic food items, which we will list for you, to the various chain grocery stores and other existing outlets in the Northwest. We need Mr. Henderson to end his ban on UPE shipments to the Republic, so we can make our own arrangements for needed pharmaceuticals and medical supplies to be delivered on his vehicles, and also so that people living outside the Republic can help out their relatives in the Northwest individually, by sending them needed commodities. We understand that this will cause difficulties on your end, and you will of course be compensated for your goods and for your trouble. Compensated quite handsomely, in fact. Capitalism in the past has never been too worried about legalities when there are profits to be made. You traded under the table with old South Africa, and Iran, and Cuba, and North Korea willingly enough."

"Take your money and shove it up your *goyische tuches!*" shrieked Perlman, totally out of control. "You will get nothing, nothing from anyone in America or anyone else in de woild, if de Joosh pipple have anything to say about it, and we will, you schmucks! Oh yes, we will! I am sitting here by mein shvimming pool in Brentwood and I am watching TV and I am vatching you all starve and *die*, you and your shiksas and your little white brats, I am vatching you all *die* like dogs!"

A gloved hand appeared in the upper right hand corner of the screen behind the gibbering Jew-face of Michael Perlman, holding an automatic pistol with a silencer. There was a spitting sound like a match striking, and then red oozing liquid covered the videocam.

"Good timing, Charlie!" muttered Barrow under his breath.

"Actually, no, Mr. Perlman, it is we who are watching *you* die," said Morehouse smoothly.

The faces on the other video split screens registered shock and consternation, then they all twisted wildly as the wealthy men turned their heads and looked around their plush offices in terror, looking for similar assassins behind them. All except for Lodge, who smiled wryly. "More of your proactive diplomacy, Mr. Morehouse?" he asked in a calm voice, sounding almost amused.

"Precisely, Mr. Lodge. One of our boys from Operation We Are Not Amused whom we persuaded to do an encore down in Tinsel Town." [See *The Brigade* by the author.]

"Nice new friends you've got there, Walter," said Lodge.

"I like 'em" replied Stanhope.

Red Morehouse struck while the iron was hot, as the blood dripped off the screen in Perlman's Los Angeles office and revealed him slumped over his desk with his brains showing. "Gentlemen, let me lay this out for you nice and neat. We have spent the past five and a half years spilling a lot of blood to make this new Homeland of ours. Mostly your blood, but a lot of our own as well, because that is the price of freedom. We will keep on doing so, whenever it is required. If you try to starve our children, if you deny our sick people the medicine they need, if you try to plunge the Northwest into darkness, if you try to harm this Republic in any way, then we will kill you, because that is what we do to the white man's enemies. Then if the man who succeeds to your job refuses to mend his ways, we will kill him as well. And so forth and so on, until we find someone who thinks enough of his own skin or who simply likes money enough to play ball with us. How long do you think it will be before we can find someone in your respective organizations with such a pragmatic view? Not long, I think. How many more such examples will we have to make? Not many, I'd guess. Now, you have a choice here. You can live the rest of your lives surrounded by

bodyguards and living in fortresses, which will do you no good in the long run, or you can accept the verdict of history. The Northwest American Republic is a fact of life, from now on. Deal with it."

Morehouse paused, and looked at Henderson. "Mr. Henderson, for what it's worth, I offer my sincere sympathy and regret at the death of your son, Captain Harold Henderson. One of the certainties of war is that young men die. Please, sir, help us make sure that it doesn't happen again." Morehouse reached under the table and turned off the screen with a snap.

"I just got a coded text," said Barrow, lifting his cell phone. "Colonel Randall and his team have E&E'd successfully. They should be back in the Republic by tomorrow."

"All right!" exclaimed Morgan happily.

"At the earliest opportunity please convey my congratulations to the Colonel and his team on a successful operation," said Morehouse. "Now, I think we can break for an early supper, comrades. Back in an hour?"

"What are they serving in the cafeteria tonight?" asked Salvatore.

"I think it's lasagna," said Morehouse with a smile.

IV

New Dawn

(Six months after Longview)

"I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it"
—Thomas Jefferson

The following document, subsequently known as the Basic Act of Establishment and General Repeal, was published in all major newspapers and posted to all major websites of the Northwest Republic, and delivered in the form of a nationwide televised address by the acting State President on March the seventh. Although predating the actual ratification of the Northwest Constitution by some months, the Basic Act laid down the ground rules for the new state, and is considered by historians as the formal beginning of the new Republic and the end of the Cleanup, by virtue of formally reinstituting the rule of law:

The Constitutional Convention and government of the Northwest American Republic, assembled at Olympia, in anticipation of the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic by said Convention, do hereby declare and proclaim for the purpose of interim governance the following acts of repeal, and do also decree the following affirmative statutes and acts, to wit:

1. The Constitutional Convention now sitting at Olympia, and the government instituted by the Convention, are henceforth the sole governing authority of the Northwest American Republic. Martial law is hereby rescinded in all remaining counties of the

Republic wherein it is still in effect, and the entire Republic is henceforth under civil authority.

2. All federal, state, municipal, county, and other law enforcement agencies that existed under the United States are hereby abolished. All law enforcement plant, property, premises, and personnel are herewith consolidated into the Northwest Civil Guard.
3. Elections for all offices under the new Constitution to be promulgated and ratified by the Convention will take place no more than thirty (30) days after ratification, the precise date to be determined by the Electoral Committee.
4. **Graduated Franchise**: For the purpose of the Republic's initial national elections only, any resident of the NAR over age 18 may be granted third-class citizenship and one (1) vote thereby, provided they swear an oath of loyalty to the Republic before an election commissioner and bring the notarized instrument of said oath to the polls on Election Day.

   Residents requesting third-class citizenship must also produce a certificate from the Civil Guard, affirming that the individual in question did not commit any acts or crimes in the service of the United States government and/or its multifarious agencies during the War of Independence that were of an especially heinous, cruel, or violent nature; and that furthermore, according to all information available, the said petitioning individual did not at any time during the war act in the capacity of an informer or collaborator with the United States forces.

   Second-class citizenship, carrying two (2) votes for electoral purposes, is hereby granted to all serving members of the Northwest Defense Force, as well as to all women who can prove they are the mother of three or more children living in the home or resident elsewhere in the Republic.

   First-class citizenship, carrying three (3) votes for electoral purposes, is hereby granted to all personnel over the age of 14 years who served in the Northwest Volunteer Army, or who served the Party in any capacity either during or prior to

the War of Independence. First-class citizenship is also hereby granted to all members of the Northwest Defense Force who fought in the battle of Portland from November first through November fourth, or who have been decorated for valor in combat during the Consolidation, or who served in the unit designated as Force 101.

5. All laws and ordinances which previously existed under the United States of America and its state and local governments that in any way prohibit, restrict, control, or limit the keeping and bearing of arms, the open or concealed carrying of arms, and the possession and transportation of firearms, ammunition, powder, supplies, cartridge casings, or any other material necessary to the exercise of the First Amendment of the Northwest Constitution, are hereby repealed and declared to be null, void, and of no effect.

6. All vouchers, receipts, and IOUs issued by officers and other personnel of the Northwest Volunteer Army and the Northwest Defense Force for personal property, cash, food, supplies, vehicles, fuel, weapons and ammunition, or other material during the War of Independence and the Consolidation must be presented for payment to any office of the Ministry of Finance or the Northwest Defense Force within a period of ten (10) years dating from this proclamation. Such vouchers or receipts must be presented by the original persons to whom they were issued, or by their legal heirs. Where possible such documents shall be authenticated by the original issuing NVA or NDF officer if they can be located, before payment. If the original issuing officer is dead or cannot be located, the Ministry and the NDF shall make reasonable assumption of good faith and shall reimburse such creditors.

7. All debts owed to American financial institutions, specifically to include home mortgages and liens, mortgages and liens on any commercial or industrial property, credit card debt, automobile debt, student loans, and all other forms of corporate indebtedness or indebtedness to Jews or Jewish financial institutions that existed prior to the signing of the treaty at Longview, are

hereby declared null and void. Existing home ownership in the Republic shall be determined on grounds of present occupancy. The Bureau of Race and Resettlement shall expedite the transfer of title deeds free and clear to homeowners.

8. All real estate, money, valuables, fixtures, vehicles, and other property abandoned by white persons who have fled the Republic, will be deeded to the National Abandoned Property Trust established by the Convention on February 20, and shall be placed in a state of escrow for a period of one (1) year from the date of this proclamation. During that time any person seeking the restoration of any real or personal property thus sequestered, or seeking compensation for any property which for any reason cannot or will not be returned, may make application at any office of the Trust or at any Civil Guard station, provided that such application shall be made in person by the property owner and that said property owner provide proof of their permanent return to the Northwest Republic.

9. At the conclusion of the one-year period described in the previous paragraph, any and all abandoned property that remains unclaimed may be sold or distributed to such governmental or private agencies as the officers of the Trust and the government of the NAR shall determine.

10. All real estate, money, valuables, fixtures, vehicles, and other abandoned property reasonably determined to have been owned by Jews, by non-whites, by sexual deviates, by the United States government or by any American state or local government, by any corporate entity hostile to the Republic, or by any individual determined to have been irredeemably hostile to the Republic during the War of Independence, is herewith declared to be the property of the state and shall be distributed among the appropriate government departments and agencies. The Ministry of Defense shall have first refusal on all American military property and installations. The Ministry of Race and Resettlement shall have first refusal on all housing for potential use for new immigrants. The Ministry of Finance shall receive all identifiable enemy cash, stocks and bonds, coins and precious

metals, jewelry, and other movable personal property of value that can be liquidated for the treasury.

11. The retail sale of alcoholic beverages and intoxicating liquors is hereby declared to be a state revenue monopoly, and shall be administered through the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, which shall be a statutory body to be run at a profit for the benefit of the treasury. Private sale of alcoholic beverages by individuals and businesses shall be legal, but subject to taxation to be determined at a later date.

12. The retail sale of tobacco products is hereby declared to be a state revenue monopoly, and shall be administered through the Tobacco Control Board, which shall be a statutory body to be run at a profit for the benefit of the treasury. Private cultivation of tobacco and sale of tobacco products shall be legal, but subject to taxation to be determined at a later date.

13. All laws and ordinances of the United States and its several states and local authorities prohibiting the use, possession, cultivation, and transportation of marijuana and/or cannabis products are hereby repealed and rendered null and void. The Ministry of Finance and the future Parliament may at their discretion impose excise taxes on the cultivation of cannabis hemp and the manufacture and sale of marijuana and cannabis-related products.

14. The use, possession, sale, importation and transportation of hard narcotics such as powdered cocaine, crack or crystal cocaine, methamphetamine, ecstasy, heroin, PCP and lysergic acid shall not be illegal per se, but until such time as these substances pose no further risk to the fabric of society, shall be treated by the Civil Guard and the Ministry of Justice as an anti-social activity and dealt with as the appropriate authorities see fit. The use of capital punishment is authorized in especially egregious cases.

15. Homosexuality is henceforth legally defined as a mental illness. Those suffering from this condition will be suitably confined in secure mental facilities for treatment. The Civil Guard and Ministry of Justice may reserve the right to prosecute the commission of actual homosexual acts through the criminal code.

16. The practice of infanticide by abortion is prohibited, except in cases where two physicians certify to the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Justice that the prospective carrying of a fetus to full term constitutes a clear and present danger to the life of the mother, or else that the fetus will be born irremediably mentally retarded, brain-damaged, or dead. Subsequent confirmation is to be obtained prior to any abortive procedure by a third physician acting under the direction of the Ministry of Public Health. Individual cases of infanticide will be treated by the state and by law enforcement as acts of premeditated murder.

17. **National Service**. The first national service intake of young people aged 18 to 20 who have completed high school will begin on June 21. All citizens and residents of the Republic aged from 15 to 20 must immediately register for national service.

National Service shall consist of one (1) year in the National Labor Service and two (2) years in the Northwest Defense Force for males, and two (2) years in the National Labor Service for females. Female citizens and residents of the Republic may be exempted from up to one (1) year of national service on grounds of impending or recent maternity. For the first three (3) years from the date of this proclamation, young men may upon graduation from high school opt to go directly into the Northwest Defense Force for a period of two (2) years.

All persons having completed national service will subsequently be eligible to attend any college, university, or technical school in the Republic free of charge for tuition and housing.

18. All laws and ordinances that existed under the United States and its several states and local authorities dealing with taxation, regulation, and/or control of private business and enterprise are hereby repealed and rendered null and void, and of no effect.

19. All laws and ordinances that existed under the United States and its several states and local authorities dealing with the taxation of income, and of homesteads housing individuals and families, are hereby repealed and rendered null and void, and of no effect.

20. The conversion of the Northwest American Republic to its own currency, the Northwest credit, shall begin on the first day of July of this year for a transitional period of six months until the thirty-first day of December, after which date no monies other than the Northwest credit shall be accepted as legal tender in the Republic.

* * *

For Amber Myers, the dreaded Knock on the Door finally came one balmy evening in late April. Actually the Knock On The Door was a ring at the doorbell, and it came just as the family was sitting down to dinner.

"What's for dessert?" asked Georgia, as she usually did at the beginning of any meal.

"I made us brownies," said Amber. "I wanted to serve ice cream with them, but there's no more ice cream in the stores."

"Why not?" asked Georgia.

"Because the Nazis ate it all!" replied Amber viciously.

"Mom, I'm ten years old, not four," said Georgia in disgust. "Come on, really, why is there no ice cream in the stores?"

"Because the United States government has imposed economic sanctions on the Northwest," explained Dr. Clancy Myers. He pointedly avoided using the term Northwest Republic to avoid setting off his wife into another one of her hissy fits. "That means that no one in America is supposed to do business with us or send us anything to buy or sell. The sanctions aren't working very well, at least not so far. Too much border, and too many people interested in making a buck off smuggling. The U.S.A. was never able to seal off the southern border sufficiently to stop illegal immigration, and they're not having much more success now with the even longer border around the Northwest. Certain items like gasoline are more expensive than they used to be, and a lot of luxury items aren't available any more, but nobody is actually going hungry, or doing without basic needs like clothing and heat and most medicine. But one effect of the sanctions is that there's not the kind of big selection

of merchandise there used to be in the stores. Sometimes we run short on certain items. This week it happens to be ice cream."

"The shelves in Southgate Mall are half empty," said Amber mournfully. "So are the shelves in Safeway. Mighty Mart is even worse."

"You always hated Mighty Mart, Mom," said Georgia. "Mighty Mart never had anything but cheap Chinese crap anyway, you said so."

"That's true," agreed Clancy. "Now people in Missoula can go downtown to stores owned by local people, small businessmen who can make a living once again now that they don't have to compete with Chinese slave labor via Mighty Mart. Also, it means we get things fixed when they break and we don't just throw them away and go to Mighty Mart and buy another one." He avoided saying "white people" for the same reason he avoided saying "Northwest Republic." Clancy was coming to realize that the Party and the new authorities weren't quite the ogres everyone had expected, but he was still worried that his wife would one day lose it and go off into an anti-NAR tirade in public that might attract the attention of this new Bureau of State Security that everyone was whispering about.

"And you didn't used to like all those Mexicans, either," said Kevin reminded his mother as he spooned mashed potatoes into his mouth.

"Kevin, that's not true!" snapped Amber.

"Then why did you always wrinkle your nose and tap your toes and snort like a horse when they held us up in the line?" asked Kevin. "I guess it's true what Mr. Overbury at school says. Liberals are hypocrites. They want to tell everybody else how to live, but they don't want to live in the messes they create."

"Oh, my God, what are these monsters turning you into?" moaned Amber. "I suppose the Nazis make poor Mr. Overbury say those things, or else they'll come and take him away in the night. And don't tell me they're not doing just that very thing, Clancy! You ought to know, after what happened to poor Linda!"

"I have no intention of denying it, dear," said Dr. Myers with a sigh.

It was true. Linda Barnard at the University had disappeared on Christmas Eve, and Clancy had been delegated by the faculty to approach Jason Stockdale about it, since he seemed to have a friendly relationship with the new chancellor. Stockdale had proclaimed an open door policy, and so Myers took advantage of it. He went to Stockdale's office on the day after New Year's and knocked on the door, noting with approval that the young man had exchanged his NDF uniform for a sober and more academic suit and tie. "Linda who?" Stockdale had replied to the question, arching his eyebrows.

"Professor Linda Barnard from the Media and Journalism Department," said Clancy patiently. "She's missing, but her mother is still in the nursing home, her car is in her garage, and I'm told there is no sign she took any of her things with her or that she left voluntarily. Mr. Stockdale, you know quite well who and what I'm talking about. I don't expect you to reveal classified information, if that's what this is, but if she's dead, her friends would like to know. I'd also like to know if we're going to be arrested and disappear ourselves, if we have a quiet private memorial service for Linda and for the Copettas?"

"I repeat, Linda who?" asked Stockdale. "There is no record of any such person ever having worked here at the University of Montana, on the faculty or in any other capacity," he went on. "Check the computer and personnel files yourself if you don't believe me. In fact, you will find that no such person ever existed. No driver's license, no voter's registration, no bank records, no property listing. If you go to the house this imaginary individual allegedly lived in, you will find that the premises have been taken over by the Bureau of Race and Resettlement, and for all I know there may be a family of white refugees from Florida or Toronto living there already. I suspect that given time, there will eventually be no birth certificate or old social security number or anything like that. We've got a lot of really good computer people working for us over in Olympia who specialize in correcting erroneous public records all throughout North America, and even the world. You won't even find any references to any such individual in back issues of the school paper. Those files have been sequestered until a number of factual errors in them can be corrected. It seems our student reporters were very sloppy; there are all kinds of references in there to people

who never existed and events that never occurred. Don't worry; we'll have definitive editions back in the archives soon."

"Good God, it's like *1984*!" groaned Clancy, slumping down into a chair in front of Stockdale's desk. "Right down the memory hole! Mr. Stockdale, I . . ."

"Call me Jason. You did when I was in your class, and I see no reason to get all formal now."

"Uh, I did explain to you that the favor you think we did for Jenny was done without the knowledge of my wife or myself?" asked Myers.

"Yes, I know, it was Peanut and Kevin and Bobby, but the end effect is the same," said Stockdale. "My wife owes her life to your family."

"Then hopefully I can speak a bit more freely than most without going down the memory hole myself," said Myers. "Jason, I won't deny that I see a lot of good coming out of your revolution. I see it already, here in the university where we can actually *teach* without fear again, to students who really want to learn. Not to mention our new faculty—my God, we now have three Nobel laureates teaching here who have fled from Europe! Just not having to worry about the constant petty crime from Mexicans and drug addicts is wonderful, being able to leave my house and my car unlocked, and not having to worry about Georgia if she's an hour or so late coming home from school, because I can be sure she hasn't been snatched off the street by some kind of pedophile freak. I'm genuinely grateful for that, Jason. We all are. You guys are well on your way to winning people's hearts and minds, and then you go and do something like *this!* I suppose my attitude is typical of people around here for whom the jury is still out: thanks for getting the American assholes off our backs, now when are you going to stop killing people?"

"Hmmm . . ." said Stockdale, tapping his pen on the desk. "Look, Dr. Myers, I was just a Volunteer, a common or garden-variety shoot-'em-in-the-head and wire-a-bomb-to-their-car type. I'm not a trained Party political officer or a historian like Doctor Luger, but I'll answer that as best I can. I think if you asked every Northwest Volunteer why he or she did what they did during the war, you'd get a different answer each time. I admit that a lot of us—hey, maybe most of us—joined the

NVA and staged this revolution purely out of personal motives of anger and revenge, and there's nothing wrong with that, or unexpected. Very few people are deep philosophical types, and fewer still actually base their behavior and their lives on profound moral principles. Hell, we were lucky enough back in the 'teens to find that first thousand white people who still could base their behavior and their lives on some kind of idealistic principle. I was one such person, though, and here's my take on it.

"At some point in time, a long time ago, our whole civilization started to slide off the tracks. There's all kinds of debate as to when that point was, and everybody's got a pet theory. Adam Weishaupt and the Illuminati, the Civil War, the establishment of the Federal Reserve, the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whatever. The fact remains that by the time you and I were born, all of Western civilization was off the track and sinking into a swamp. Not only civilization, but the very existence of the race that created it was in question. You know the rap, I'm sure. I won't ask you if you agree, because what matters is that the new government agrees." Stockdale leaned forward. "For the first time in generations, Dr. Myers, white people now have a *country of our own*, and the forces resisting the existential crisis of the white race now have the full power of a modern state behind us.

"What we have to do, Dr. Myers, is wrench that train of Western civilization back onto the track by force, the same way we took this land from the United States, because it is now apparent that nothing else will work. Our enemies are utterly implacable, they are impervious to civil argument or reason, and so from now on, they get a club upside the head. Among other things, that means avoiding the mistakes of the past. This experiment was tried once before, during the last century in Germany, and the Germans made a terrible mistake that eventually cost them the life of their nation. They allowed the Jews and the lefty scum to conduct a six-year campaign of incitement to hatred and economic warfare. Eventually the Jews got their war. That's not going to happen this time," Stockdale went on in a grim voice. "We will not allow disloyalty, subversion, incitement or cultural poisoning from within the Republic or from outside it. This non-existent person you referred to and all like her are finally going to hear the word *no*, loud and clear.

She's heard it already, and though I don't know for certain, I suspect it was the last thing she ever heard."

Clancy groaned and buried his face in his hands; Stockdale ignored him. "We are now a free country, but in order to keep us that way, we do make a few very basic demands of our own people. One of them is that every young man must become a soldier for a time, and defend their country and their civilization, including your son Kevin and my brother Bobby when their time comes. Another demand is that from now on, our people refrain from two or three specific behaviors that our instinct teaches us are vile and wicked, and which our history and experience as a people teaches us are socially and culturally poisonous.

"Avoiding these behaviors is not particularly onerous or hard; there is nothing at all painful or intolerably restrictive to anyone's personal liberty about *not* doing these things. I, for one, have never had any difficulty refraining from fucking other men in the ass. It's an incredibly easy thing to *not* do. Nor have I ever been so bloody, bird-brained stupid as to believe that the Jews are God's Chosen people or that NS Germany gassed six million of them. Even if I did, I would have sense enough to keep my mouth shut about it, find something else in life to concern myself with, and not attempt to do harm to others for the sake of this weird notion. This non-existent person that you speak of was fully aware of what her position would be in a society run by moral decency, and yet like so many of her kind she was so stupidly arrogant as to believe the rules did not apply to her, and that what she did was a personal matter that was none of anyone else's business. She found out the hard way that she was wrong, but she wasn't just wrong, she was *bad*. Sinful, if you want to put a religious slant on it. We are returning to the old ways where gray areas are few and far between, and what is bad and sinful is not only not tolerated, but *punished*.

"As to the removal of such people from the historic record insofar as it is possible for us to do so, there are two reasons for that. In the first place, we have no intention of allowing our living enemies to make political and propaganda hay from our dead ones. They will anyway, since of course, we can't completely erase a hundred years of filth from official memory, but as a matter of policy we intend to make it as hard for them to do so as possible. We don't give them a single inch, not ever.

The second reason is a moral one. This endless procession of deviancy and corruption and sin that has trooped through everyone's lives for the past century deserves to be forgotten as much as possible. There is always shit in the sewers, but it needs to stay there and not overflow into the streets and onto people's lawns. Allowing these people to have names and human faces detracts from the overriding magnitude and import of their crimes. It generates sympathy they don't deserve. We don't want anyone to put a human face on their revolting behavior. It is enough to know that it happened, and it must never happen again. We don't need to wallow in endless details."

"And what the hell gives you the right to erase human beings from memory as if they never existed?" Clancy demanded.

"What gives us that right?" chuckled Jason. "We're the guys with the guns and the will to use them, that's what. We gained that right when we finally stopped tapping on computer keyboards and stood up to ZOG with weapons in our hands and spilled blood, including our own, to obtain it. Dr. Myers, there are certain things in life that simply have to be done, for no other reason than because they are *right*. You don't agonize or introspect over these things, you simply do them, and you never, ever talk about them afterward."

"But these are *people,* dammit!" shouted Clancy.

"Of course they are," said Jason, nodding in agreement. "Bad people. People are the source of everything that's wrong in the world, in case you haven't noticed. Back in the old days, screwed-up angst-ridden and disillusioned young white people used to moan about how life sucks, and the world is a horrible place. Not true. Life is actually wonderful, and the world is a beautiful place. It's *people* and their behavior who make it horrible and sad. Now there are a few less of those people here in the Northwest."

Back at the Myers family dinner table, Clancy asked Kevin, "Overbury is your history teacher, right?"

"Nobody makes Mister Overbury say anything, Mom. He's just saying what he always wanted to say," Kevin told his mother. "He explained that to us. Now he's free to teach us real history, what really happened, and not what some politically correct school board full of mud people and faggots say happened, most of which is bullshit."

Amber was about to light into her son for his language when the doorbell rang. Amber got up and peeped out the curtains she always kept pulled over the picture window these days. She turned to her husband, her face white as a sheet. "Clancy!" she whispered. "It's happening! *They've come for me!"*

Clancy got up and looked out the window. "Amber, that's just one of the new police cars," he told her.

"The blue, white and green ones?" asked Kevin.

"Yes. The Civil Guard, it's called now."

The doorbell rang again. "I'll get it," said Clancy steadily. He was unsettled and nervous; despite the lack of any real outward appearance of a totalitarian police state, he couldn't help but remember Linda Barnard's disappearance. Had they just sent one single car for her?

"No, don't interfere, Clancy, it's me they want!" announced Amber dramatically. She threw open the door.

"Good evening, ma'am," said a male voice outside on the front steps. "Are you Mrs. Amber Myers?"

"That's *Ms.* Amber Escott-Myers to you, fascist scum!" Amber replied in a snide yet shaky voice. His wife was genuinely terrified, but she was still trying to show courage in front of the children, and Clancy couldn't help but admire her for it. "Finally made it to the top of your little list, did I?"

"Uh, yes, ma'am, you did," said the voice. Clancy stepped to his wife's side and saw a single police officer standing on his doorstep, a large genial-looking man wearing the new uniform of dark green trousers with bloused boots, light green shirt with a slightly different version of the eagle-and-swastika emblem from that worn by the NDF, and a green-billed cap with silver sunburst-type crest on it.

"I'm Doctor Clancy Myers. What can I do for you, Officer, uh, Rhinehart?" asked Clancy, looking at the man's nametag.

"Actually, it's Guardsman Rhinehart now," replied the cop with a smile. "Don't worry, I'm still not used to it myself. I'm here to . . ."

"I know why you're here," said Amber, re-appearing at the door with her coat on and holding her purse. The two kids crowded behind her, staring at the cop with wide eyes. "I don't know who denounced me, maybe even someone in my own family." (She glared at Clancy.)

"But whoever it was, they're right. I am still a loyal American, I love and respect people of all colors and religion, and I will never give in to you murdering racist bastards! No matter what you do to me! So go ahead, you son of a bitch! Drag me away from my home in front of my children, and show them just what you are! Take me down to your secret torture chamber and do your worst! Beat me! Waterboard me! Put your electrodes on my nipples and fry my tits to teriyaki! Gang rape me! I will tell you nothing! *Nothing!*" she shouted, her voice rising to a frenzied scream.

"Oooo-kaaaaay," said the puzzled cop. "Actually, that's not why I'm here, ma'am." He handed her a bulky manila envelope. "Here's the deed and property title to your house."

"What?" said Amber, surprised.

"The deed to your house," explained Rhinehart patiently. "Basic Law of March Seventh. No more mortgage payments for anybody. Your house is all yours, now. No more property taxes to pay, either, so long as people are actually living here full time. One of you needs to sign for these papers."

Amber gaped at him. Clancy stepped forward and took the envelope of documents, then signed the paper taped to the outside of the envelope. The cop tore off the top copy, folded it, and put it into his pocket. "Thanks, folks. Hope you enjoy living in your new debt-free house. I know I like living in mine. You folks have a good evening."

"Wait," said Clancy. "Look, Officer, uh, Guardsman Rhinehart, I have a few questions. You did us a good turn bringing us these papers, and although we were just sitting down to dinner, the least we can do is offer you a cup of coffee or a glass of iced tea. Won't you come in for a few minutes? Please?" Amber was glaring icicles at him, but he eased her out of the way and beckoned the policeman into the house.

"Might as well," said Rhinehart agreeably. "Coffee sounds good. I've only got a couple more of these to deliver."

"Georgia, bring a cup of coffee for Guardsman Rhinehart, will you?" Clancy told his daughter, figuring he'd better not ask his wife. "How do you take it?"

"Black is fine," said the cop.

"I'm curious about something," Clancy went on as he ushered the Guard into his living room. "Not that we don't appreciate it, but why are the police delivering these documents? Don't you have more important things to do?"

"Not really, thank God," said Rhinehart, seating himself on the sofa at Clancy's invitation. "Not much crime these days. Well, hasn't been much actual crime in Missoula for some years now, since the NVA ran all the beaners and the junkies and the drunken Indians out."

"What about the crime caused by the NVA itself, with their murders and their bombings and their terrorism?" snapped Amber from the doorway, still glaring at them.

"Yes, ma'am, there was that," agreed Rhinehart. "Although we had more problems with those damned FATPOs, getting drunk and stoned, beating people on the street, shooting into people's houses, that kind of thing, not to mention what they did in their official capacity. Not that the local police were allowed to do anything about that. Any of us who tried ended up sitting in one of those torture chambers you mentioned just now, Mrs. Myers. Their federal badges topped ours. But nowadays everything is as quiet and peaceful as I've ever known it. The people who made trouble simply aren't around any more."

"I notice you're not wearing a sidearm," pointed out Clancy. "How's that working out?"

"Oh, my gun's in the car. I can get it if it looks like I may need it, but that hasn't happened so far. They're weaning us off 'em, so to speak, but it looks like unarmed police in an armed society is turning out to be a good idea," Rhinehart replied, taking the cup of coffee from Georgia. "Thanks, young lady."

"Did you eat all the ice cream?" asked Georgia solemnly.

"What?"

"Mom says the Nazis ate all the ice cream in the stores, and that's why we can't have any for dessert," said Georgia. She pointed at the eagle and swastika sewn over the Guard's buttoned right pocket. "You're a Nazi. Did you eat all the ice cream?"

"Uh, no, honey, I didn't," said the bemused Rhinehart. "And actually, I'm not a Nazi. Most Civil Guards aren't. We were city police or county deputies before, and we stayed on. That emblem is just part of

our uniform, now that we have a new government, and yeah, it's a bit strange. I never thought I'd be wearing a swastika, but a lot of strange things have happened in the past five years. I've met some real Nazis since Longview, true, and they do some unusual things sometimes, but no, I don't think they're running around to grocery stores and eating all the ice cream so children can't have any."

"Ignore her," said Clancy. "My daughter is ten years old and not four, as she just reminded us a few minutes ago, and she knows she's being silly."

"Peanut is just being a brat to pick at Mom," said Kevin. "I think the revolution is cool!"

"You were talking about the new unarmed police force," said Clancy, trying to steer the conversation away from both Amber's confectionary paranoia and Kevin's adolescent enthusiasm about the Northwest revolution.

"Oh, yeah," said Rhinehart as he sipped his coffee. "The way they laid it out to us in our briefings is that in a truly free society, everyone should have guns *except* the police. That way we're not just another armed gang, we're representatives of the law, and if the law and the state itself command respect, then we don't need guns to do it for our officers. The message does seem to be sinking through, even in a wild and woolly place like Montana," he went on. "Oh, the cops still have guns, all right. We actually have a better firearms course and higher range qualification standard these days than we did under the old system, and we can get weapons quick enough if the need arises. We just don't carry them around with us on routine duties and community contact work. So far, everyone seems to be getting with the program. Unless they're just plain crazy, nobody is going to pull down on a Guard, because they know who's standing behind us, and they know who's standing behind us won't f . . . uh, fool around if you shoot one of us. It's not like the old days, when there were zillions of laws and the whole system could be played like a pinball machine by anybody with enough money. We have very few laws these days, but the ones we have, you obey. Period, end of story. When folks clearly understand where the lines are and that you don't ever cross them, there's no problem."

"People having jobs certainly helps," said Clancy. "My understanding is that what with the new Labor Service, and with all the regulations and taxes taken off small businesses, we already have full employment here in Missoula, which was certainly not the case a year ago. Kevin has an after-school job now, and other business people downtown keep trying to lure him away with better offers."

"Mr. Majeski is already paying me in the new Northwest credits," said Kevin, holding up a red five-credit note bearing Melanie Young's image, modified from its original pink by the Ministry of Finance.

"Yeah, the Guard is getting paid in credits now as well, even though the official transition period doesn't start until July the first," said Rhinehart. "The new mayor was talking in the city council last night about how Missoula is going to petition the Bureau of Race and Resettlement in Olympia to steer a lot more of these refugees from the States out here, instead of Portland and Seattle and the I-5 corridor, because with the old factories re-opening and new ones on the drawing board, we actually have a labor shortage. You're right, Dr. Myers. With no minorities and full employment, crime figures disappear. Sure, in any society you're going to get a small element of people who are too lazy to work, or who are weak in the head, or just plain predatory. That will happen here, but when it does we'll deal with it, and we have a lot more latitude to do so now. Since we're no longer locking people up for having a couple of joints, we can concentrate on more serious stuff, like what's left of the meth trade, which isn't much."

"How on earth did you ever clean that up?" asked Clancy curiously. "Meth was everywhere in Missoula. I used to be afraid to go certain places with my family because of all the hopheads."

"First time we catch anybody with meth or rock, we take 'em down to the station and beat the crap out of 'em," said Rhinehart happily. "We figure a lot of people just haven't wrapped their minds around the fact that things have changed. Then we tell them that the second time we catch 'em, we're going to take them up into the mountains, dig a hole, and leave 'em in it. So far, we haven't had to do that. For one thing, the market has dried up, since almost all the remaining junkies ran off when the NDF marched in. You'd be amazed how quick people acquire a whole new attitude, when they know some lawyer in a thousand-dollar

suit isn't going to help them play games with the system for a year and then get them off with probation. Of course, there are no more lawyers any more, and I can tell you for sure that every cop is over the moon about *that*."

"And you think this is *right*?" demanded Amber from the doorway where she stood. "A totalitarian state denying accused persons legal representation? Assaulting and threatening substance abusers and denying them due process?"

"I'm no big legal scholar or philosopher, ma'am," said Rhinehart with a shrug. "All I know is that this way *works*, and the old way didn't. I know that arrests are way down for everything from drugs to burglary to domestic violence. I know that with no blacks or browns, there's almost nobody ever in our jail any more. I know we don't need half as many police as we did before the revolution, and I know everybody in the community is a lot safer. The old system sounded good in theory, but in practice, it sucked. The new way is better, and that's a fact. Well, thanks for the coffee, folks, but I need to get going."

Clancy escorted the cop out the door and down to his patrol car. "Look, Rhinehart, I really did want to talk to you about something," he said. "You heard what my wife said when she opened the door. She was a lifelong Democrat and a Hillary Clinton supporter before the revolution, and she has a tendency to kind of—overreact these days. She really isn't any kind of threat to the new government, her liberalism is just kind of a habit I know she needs to break. She really did think you were coming to take her away just now, and I know it happens, because some friends of ours have, ah, disappeared."

"Yeah, it happens," agreed Rhinehart grimly. "Nothing we can do about it. When somebody files a report on one of those missing person cases, it goes to the new captain, who is a former NVA man. He knows which ones are the political cases, and he balls it up and throws it in the wastebasket. Although to be fair, sometimes it's not a political disappearance in that sense. A lot of the time it's people just getting twitchy about something in their past or some run-in they've had with the NDF or something, so they jump in their cars and they cut and run back east across Interstate 15, back into the United States. Those highways are still open, you know. All of the border posts and barbed

wire and fences and minefields they're building are on the U.S. side. The media in both countries are starting to call it the McCurtain, you know, from McDonald's, like everything in America could be called a McSomething or other. The Republic doesn't want to keep anybody in who doesn't want to be here, it's the United States that wants to keep people out of the Republic. Anybody who wants to leave the Northwest still can. The official attitude is good riddance."

"Amber wanted us to leave, but I think we're past that, and now that we own the house I think that will be a definite incentive for her to forget about fleeing," said Clancy. "But look, Rhinehart, I have to ask you, please, if you could forget about Amber's little outburst when she came to the door, and her attitude just now, and not report it to anyone who might decide to take it further. She just talks that way because it was fashionable when she was in college, and she never grew out of it. But still, if certain people were to overhear her saying some of these things and it got back to the wrong quarters . . ."

Rhinehart nodded somberly. "Yeah, there is a downside to this new way of ours, and that is that the people we've all been used to insulting and bad-mouthing for the past five years, and before that, are now in a position to do something about it. Looks like what goes around does indeed come around. Nobody ever figured that these men and women we were taught all our lives to hate and deride would win, and that someday we'd have to put our asses where our mouths once were. Liberalism is no longer an affordable luxury. It's dangerous, and now that it's dangerous and the other side of the bread is buttered, there's a *lot* fewer liberals around. Don't worry, Dr. Myers, I won't say anything, but you really need to see if you can get your wife to tone it down in public. I was never NVA, but some of my new colleagues at the station house were, and she's lucky it wasn't one of the new guys doing this milk run delivering papers tonight."

"Is it true this Bureau of State Security thing we keep hearing about is in town now, spying on people and tapping phones and hunting down people opposed to the new régime?" asked Clancy in a worried voice. "I really need to know. Is my wife in real danger or is she just being paranoid?"

"Yeah, the revolutionary spooks are around," admitted Rhinehart. "Nobody knows where they are, or how to contact them. They're genuine secret police, in that sense. I guess my captain would know. He's that former NVA guy I told you about. Ironically, we were hunting for him during almost the full five years of the Trouble. He was the brigade commandant for Missoula County, and we never got near him. He walked in a few months ago wearing a new Guard uniform and called us all into the assembly room. 'My name is A.J. Drones,' he says. 'I'm your new station commander. Some of you boys have been wanting to get me in this place for years, and now I'm here.' Shook us up, I admit. He would probably know how to contact BOSS, but none of us does. None of us has even seen 'em, but we know they're around. I would advise your wife to be a little more circumspect in the future, Dr. Myers. Hell, a *lot* more circumspect."

* * *

The next day was a Saturday, and Clancy decided it was time finally to take the bull by the horns and have it out with his wife over her attitude toward the new government and her risky practice of baiting Missoula's new top dogs in public. He decided to send Kevin and Georgia to a movie that evening to give them some privacy, which was now both physically and morally safe to do, since the streets were white at night and the theaters were showing virtually nothing made after 1965 or so. Clancy found an old John Wayne flick on at the downtown Paramount, which was within walking distance, and he figured it was time for his kids to meet the Duke.

He went into work that morning to grade papers and work on his lecture notes for the coming week, when his students would be covering the poet William Blake. The first warning he got that anything was off kilter came at about four thirty in the afternoon, when Kevin called him from the school track meet. His mother had failed to pick him up. Puzzled, Clancy drove over and collected Kevin, then arrived at his home about five o'clock.

He could tell the moment he walked into the house that something was badly wrong. The place felt empty, and it was. He looked in the

garage and saw that the second SUV, the Range Rover, was missing. He went upstairs and found signs of hurried packing in the bedroom and in Georgia's room. He ran downstairs, calling the names of his wife and his daughter, somehow knowing in one terrifying moment that he would never hear either of them answer him again.

Clancy Myers found the note taped to the refrigerator, read it, and then he staggered into his living room and collapsed into a chair. "Dad, what's going on?" demanded Kevin. "Where are Mom and Georgie?"

"Your mother has left us," he told his son. "She is going to live with your grandmother in Washington, D.C. She says in this letter that I can have you, because you've already been ruined, and you're nothing but a little Hitler Youth now. Her own words. But she says she won't let us ruin Georgia. *Ruin Georgia?* Christ in heaven!" Clancy Myers looked at his son, tears streaming down his face. "That damnable bitch! She took our little girl, Kevin! *She took our little girl!"*

V

That Toddlin' Town
(Nine months after Longview)

Chicago, Chicago, that toddlin' town!
Chicago, Chicago, I'll show you around!
—old Frank Sinatra song

Elias Horakova was having a really bad day.

That sweltering July morning, he arrived late at his job at the Chicago Tool and Die Company's last functioning American plant in Calumet Heights, after a train commute that had stretched to three hours due to several mechanical breakdowns, and also due to a dead goat on the tracks from a Santeria ceremony the night before. Needless to say, the air conditioning on both the local rail and the El was broken. It hardly ever worked any more.

When Eli finally got to work, he learned from a memo in his mailbox that the venerable factory was finally closing its doors, and the last jobs were being shipped to the new plant in Guatemala. Eli took his lunch break in the Moose Lodge tavern down the street, quaffed one too many Old Style beers, and when he returned to work, he took a swing at his obnoxious Mexican foreman with a pipe wrench. For this he was informed that he would lose fifty percent of his severance package. The company Human Relations Committee also told him they were notifying the FBI of a possible hatecrime. Then after the endless trip home on the oven-like trains, Eli had arrived at his home in Cicero to find a dead nigger lying in his living room.

The dead man was still bleeding. He wore a filthy tank top, an empty holster on his hip, jeans and boots, and on his coal-black head was glued the remains of a bright multi-colored wool toboggan cap that was soaked in blood and brain matter. Horakova's 16-year-old

son Eddie, a chunky tow-headed youth whose arms and hands were already as big and muscular as his father's, was sitting on the couch, still holding the old .45-caliber Colt automatic he had used to shoot the huge congoid. A nine-millimeter Glock automatic that Eli had never seen before was lying on the coffee table. "Jesus Christ! Eddie? What the fuck happened?" croaked Elias, his throat suddenly bone-dry.

"It's that Jamaican badass Rico Tubbs," Eddie said in a toneless voice. "He was gonna take Millie to the Center. For questioning, he said."

"Mother of God!" cried Eli in horror. Everyone in Chicago knew what such questioning in a Neighborhood Watch clubhouse would have entailed for a 13-year-old white girl. "Where's Millie? Is she all right?" he demanded.

"She's in her room," said Eddie. "I already laid it all out for her, Dad. She was in her room the whole day, on her computer, or listening to music with her headphones on, and she didn't see or hear nothing. No matter what the cops do or say to her, she didn't see or hear nothing. She understands. She won't break, Dad. This is all on me. I won't let them involve her."

"It's not the cops I'm worried about, it's Rico's nigger buddies down at the Neighborhood Watch," said Eli, sitting down in an armchair and shakily lighting a cigarette. "Tell me what happened, Ed."

"It was maybe half an hour ago. Rico came in the door . . ."

"Did he break in?" interrupted Eli.

"No, he used his house key, the one the city made us give to the Watch," his son told him.

"Did he have any papers on him about Millie, about the family? Anything from the FBI or the Human Relations Commission?"

"Nah," said Eddie. "He just walked in. Millie and me were sitting here watching TV. Rico walks over and grabs Millie by the arm. He says, 'You be coming wit me, little mama. We got some questions for you down at de *Sen-tair,'* you know that crappy Jamaican accent he had. He didn't even look at me. He didn't care I was there. I was just a white boy, what was I gonna do? But I knew what I was gonna do, Dad. I didn't say nothing. I just got up and went into your bedroom and got the gun from your stash, jacked in a round like you showed me that

time we went shooting down in the Forest Preserves, and I walked back in here. Millie was kicking and screaming, and Rico was laughing as he dragged her out the door. I shot him once in the chest and put him down. He was lying there gasping like a fish out of water, clawing at his holster for his gun. I leaned over and took the gun. That's it on the table there. Then I put the muzzle right onto his teeth and I pulled the trigger again. Outfit style, like Stash says they used to do back in the day. I just did what I hadda do, Dad."

"I know, son," said his father, his heart breaking. "Where's your mother? Does she know?"

"No. Mom's still at work. Tommy's still at day care. Mom is picking him up on her way home."

"What about Stash?"

"He wheeled himself into the room when he heard the yelling and screaming and the shots. He's out in the garage now. He said he was getting some stuff we're gonna need."

"What stuff?" asked Eddie's father, still trying to take it all in.

"Dis stuff," said Eli's father Stanislas, a lean and wiry old man in his seventies, as he rolled his wheelchair into the living room. On his lap were several hacksaws and a roll of black garbage bags. "I'm glad you're home, Eli, because it's gonna take two of you to get dis buck's clothes off and get him into de bathtub. Den you gotta cut him up. We put de pieces in dese garbage bags, we weigh de bags down wit bricks or scrap iron, and tonight you and Eddie take de van, and you toss de bags into de lake. Throw each one in at a different place."

It was a testament to the realities of life in the United States, and Chicago in particular, that the idea of calling the police was so foolish it never even occurred to Eli to suggest it. His son had raised his hand against a man with a black skin; in Chelsea Clinton's America, his life was now over. "They're gonna come looking for him," said Eli hopelessly, gesturing toward the black carcass on the floor. "There's what? Three white homes left on Kildare Avenue, and we're the only family with a girl? If the homeys didn't know where he was going, they'll figure it out soon enough."

"Dat's why we have to hurry and get dis cleaned up," said Stash. "Once we get de cutting done, you guys have to dump de bags and de

girls will have to scrub down every inch of dis room. If de real cops get involved, dey might use dose luminol lights for bloodstains, but we'll tell 'em you came home drunk and you knocked Lorna around a few nights ago."

"I've never laid a hand on Lorna!" protested Eli angrily. "I'm not a wife-beater!" *Not like you*, he thought silently.

"Dey don't know dat," said Stash evenly.

"Did you ever cut up a body before, Grandad?" asked Eddie.

"I doubt it," snarled Eli. "Eddie, I thought you'd figured out by now that all those Outfit stories were bullshit. Your grandfather spent forty years working like a dog in the same place I just got laid off from today. If he was mobbed up, we wouldn't be living in a three-bedroom bungalow in Cicero with a half-million-dollar mortgage, he wouldn't be sleeping on a roll-out sofa bed in the garage, and you wouldn't be sharing a room with your brother."

"Sorry to hear de plant's closing down, saw dat comin' a long time ago, but we got other problems to deal wit now," said Stanislas. "Eli, you get his head and Eddie, you get his feet. Take him into de bathroom, strip him, and I'll walk you through it while I watch from the doorway. Eddie, give me de gun."

"Why?" asked Eddie.

"Because if anybody walks in dat front door while we're doin' dis besides your mother, I'm gonna kill him, and dat's no bullshit."

Eli's wife Lorna, a faded blond woman with a work-worn face, arrived home half an hour later with five-year-old Tommy. She saw what her husband and son were doing in the bathroom, and went into hysterics. Eli managed to get her calmed down after another half hour. Then he sent the little boy into Millie's room, telling a white-faced Millie to play a computer game with him and keep him in there, while Lorna got busy with the Ajax, a scrub brush, and a mop. Then Eli and his son went on with their gruesome task while old Stanislas offered helpful supervisory suggestions that made Eli wonder if his long-held, skeptical estimation of his father's alleged criminal past might need re-thinking. By nine o'clock that night, the bathtub was piled with doubled black garbage bags, firmly closed with plastic ties, and Lorna had managed to whip up a big pot of macaroni and cheese, which she

served as supper along with a plate of buttered slices of cheap white bread. This was how the family always ate anyway, since the Food Stamps program had gone bankrupt years before. Every dime she and her husband earned had to go for the house mortgage and her father-in-law's twice-weekly kidney dialysis treatments; food was a necessity of life that had to be provided as cheaply as possible.

There were no recriminations at the dinner table. This was America, these were poor white people who knew the score, and the only concern now was to save Eddie's life. "I know what I gotta do," said Eddie soberly. "Mom, Dad, give me some money, as much as you got on you, and I'll leave town. After we get rid of the bags, Dad, take me up the Tollway as far as Interstate 90, and drop me off at some truck stop. I'll hitch from there. I can make it to Wyoming in three or four days if I'm lucky, and then I'll sneak across the border into the Northwest Republic."

"But when will you come back?" asked his sister Milada, a thin girl with long blond hair who was on the verge of tears.

"I can't ever come back, Millie," said the boy. "I'm sorry it played out like this, I'm sorry I jammed the family up like this, but what's done is done."

"There has to be some other way!" moaned Lorna.

"There isn't," said Eli harshly. "He'll be tried as an adult in one of those goddamned new Hate Courts, and he'll get life in prison, although in his case that won't be long since we all know what happens to teenaged white boys in Joliet."

"What would happen?" asked Millie.

"I won't last a week," explained Eddie brutally. "The first time the niggers try to fuck me in the shower I'll fight back, and they'll stab me to death with their shivs."

No one questioned what Eddie said. Life for white people in blue-collar Chicago was grim, and even Millie was old enough to know what he was talking about. Little Tommy simply stared. He knew something bad was happening, but he didn't cry. Already he understood by some mental and emotional osmosis from the others that in this world, his family was surrounded by enemies, and he must not show weakness. "We all have to go," said Eli. "They'll be coming after all of us now,

because of that Parental Responsibility Act, and they'll give Millie and Tommy to It Takes a Village to be sold. Hell, might as well make a break for it, just on general principles. I ain't got no job any more, and at my age I ain't getting another job. I been thinking about it for a while."

"Maybe it will be all right," ventured Lorna. "The angels watched over Millie and Eddie this afternoon, maybe they'll keep on watching over us." White people in America dealt with the unbearable strain and tension of life surrounded by a slowly rising sea of mud in many ways. In Lorna's case, it was through her Catholic faith, and a resolute belief in the existence of angels on earth who would somehow make everything work out in the end. She had a shelf full of books and a rack of video discs, all on the subject of angels. No one else in the family believed in them, and no one was so cruel as to argue with her on the subject. "But we can't all go," Lorna went on "What about Stash? He's supposed to go for dialysis tomorrow. And besides, it's against the law to move to any of the Northwestern states now. We'll be arrested at the state line."

"That's why it has to be just me, Mom," said Eddie. "I broke the law when I shot that ape, but you guys haven't yet, unless you shelter me. That's why I gotta leave on my own, so I don't get you guys into more trouble."

"I don't give a damn about the law of this goddamned country no more," said Eli. "Two tours in Iraq, and what did this country ever give me in return? I got a piece of shrapnel in my leg that still hurts like hell, but the goddamned VA doctors won't take it out because it costs too much. There's no more Medicare or any kind of help for my father. Neither of you kids are learning a damned thing in school, and if your mother and I didn't stand over you and make you learn on the computer every night, neither of you would even know how to read and write. Now I got no job, because those Jews on the board of directors sent it to some shithole in Guatemala where they'll train some Indian to push the buttons on the robot that actually does what I used to do. Nothing but niggers and Mexicans everywhere like a plague of goddamned locusts! Now they do this to my family? That nigger was probably getting paid more by the city for swaggering around the neighborhood with his gun and molesting any white woman he met than I was getting paid at

the CT&D. He comes into my home and expects to rape my daughter just for shits and giggles, my son defends her, and now he's gonna get thrown away like a piece of garbage? To hell with the law and to hell with America! I say we all go Northwest!"

"But what about Stash's dialysis?" asked Lorna.

"De answer is simple," said Stanislas. "You guys go Northwest. You go tonight. You can't take me, and you know it. I'm stuck in dis chair, I can't even take a shit by myself, and I gotta get hooked up to dat goddamned machine in de hospital every three or four days. You're gonna have to run de border, where de TV says dey got army and Marines and special police units setting up barbed wire and minefields because so many white people want out of this latrine. You can't be lugging me along while you're cutting through barbed wire and dodging machine gun nests, and you can't push me across a minefield in dis chair."

"And what about our friend in the bathtub?" asked Eli.

"Before you go, stuff de garbage bags in de crawl space under de house," said Stash. "When de Neighborhood Watch shows up looking for deir head nigger in charge, I'll just clam up and tell 'em I don't know nuthin'. When Tubbsy starts getting ripe and people notice de smell, sure, dey'll find him, but I still don't know nuthin'. I mean, like I killed him and stuffed him under de house? In dis chair? Yeah, dey'll figure out what happened, but you'll be long gone."

"Then they'll just kill you," said Eli. "They'll beat you to death or drag you out into the street and run over you with their patrol SUVs like they did poor old Frank Metesky back in October when he hung blue, white and green streamers on his porch."

"I'll talk 'em out of it," said Stanislas. "I can act like a real dumb and pitiful old bohunk when I want to."

"And suppose you managed to do that, what will happen to you then, Stash?" asked Lorna. "Who will take care of you?"

"I still got some friends down at de precinct," said the old man. In Chicagoese, he was referring to the Democratic Party precinct house, not the police precinct. "Dere's still a few old bohunks down there who can get me a check of some kind, and if not, I'll go into a nursing home."

"You're not going into a nursing home," said Eli. "Especially not the ones for indigent old white people in this city, where you'll be starved and beaten by the Filipino and Nigerian orderlies, and then one night one of them will cut your throat for your IV. I'm not leaving you in a place like that while we run away, Stash." He sighed. "Eddie's right. He has to try and make it on his own. We'll dump the bags in the lake, and then I'll drop him off up where I-90 begins. When the Neighborhood Watch comes looking, Eddie just ran away, and none of us knows anything. If they honestly don't know what Tubbs was up to for his entertainment this afternoon, maybe we can get them to believe us. Eddie, go get dressed for the road. I got about forty dollars on me, I think."

"I've got twenty or thirty," said Lorna, sniffling.

"I have about a hundred dollars in my piggy bank," said Millie, her eyes tearing.

"Aw, Millie, for Christ's sake, you been saving that since you were eight," said Eddie with a sad laugh. "I don't need your money."

"You saved me from that nigger," said Millie, weeping openly now. "I know what he was going to do to me. I ain't a stupid kid any more. Now you have to go away forever because of me. I can at least give you my pig."

"Take me out to de garage and let's give 'em some time," said old Stash to his son. Eli and Eddie had built a ramp, and Stanislas could get back to his roll-up-bed sofa in the garage well enough on his own, but Eli wheeled him out anyway. When they got out to Stash's hootch he'd made for himself, he said, "Eli, dis is bullshit. You can't break up de family like dis. All of yez gotta make a run for it, get to de Northwest. Leave me. Don't worry, I'll be okay. Pack your shit, and take it on de arches. Tonight."

"Leaving you behind would break up the family," said Eli, "You're right. You can't run a border full of armed guards and land mines in a wheelchair, and that doesn't even take into account your bum kidneys and your dialysis. Eddie's young, he's smart, and I've taught him how to work with his hands, carpentry, electrical, plumbing, not to mention how to keep that piece of crap van running. Hell, he's handier around the house than I am. He can take care of himself and make a living in

Seattle or someplace like that. You can't. We can't take you, and I'm not leaving you, so this is the only way. Maybe if all of us white people had stood up to the government like those Jerry Rebs in the Northwest did, things would be different, but we played it safe and stayed on our bellies, and things ain't different. So that's the sitch, and we'll deal with it."

"Even if you can somehow talk your way out of it when dose niggers come nosing around, you got no job any more, and from what you said at dinner de goddamned FBI may be coming after you for hatecrime as well," said Stash.

"This is our home. Grandpa and grandma came to this country as DPs and spent twelve years working their fingers to the bone, grandpa swinging a pick and shovel and grandma waiting tables and sewing in a Jew sweatshop to buy this house. You grew up here and so did I, and now so have Eddie and Millie. Eddie has to leave now, but you don't, and the rest of us don't," said Eli, desperately trying to convince himself.

"Bird turd!" snarled Stash. "Why do you think my parents came here after World War Two? Dey was one step ahead of de fucking Communists back in Czechoslovakia, is why. Dey was done dere, and now we're done here, Eli. Dese things happen every few generations. All of yez need to accept what's happened and clear out. Leave me. I'll be okay."

"You're my father. I'm not running away and leaving you behind to face the music," said Eli stubbornly.

"You know damned well I was a lousy father, just like I was a lousy wiseguy," said Stanislas.

"Well, if you'd been a better wiseguy, maybe we'd be living in a nice suburb now and we wouldn't be in this shit," said Eli bitterly. "Okay, let's say for a moment that I believe you. If you really were with Giancana back in the day, why didn't you stick with it?"

"Your mother," said Stanislas with a sigh. "Just after you was born, I got caught up in one of dose big Crime Commission sweeps dey used to pull every few years, all de politicians and cops downtown standing in front of de TV cameras and telling everybody how dey was gonna shut down de Outfit and clean up Chicago. Yeah, like dat's ever gonna happen. Half of 'em were on Accardo or Momo Giancana's pad even

while dey were talkin' dat crap. I was a little fish, and my charges were all petty bullshit beefs, running a couple of handbooks, receiving, nothin' I couldn't beat, and eventually I did.

"But for de only time in her life, your mother put her foot down. She said you wasn't gonna grow up never seeing your old man except on visiting day. She didn't care what I did when I was home, so long as I was home every night, otherwise she was gone and so were you. I knew she meant it, so I went to my precinct captain and I got a union card and a job at CT&D. So instead of seeing me only on visiting day, you got to see me home every night, usually drunk and whaling on your mother or you or your brothers, taking it out on you because I was working a drill press instead of running numbers and hustling and driving a new Caddy every year." Stash looked up at him. "Eli, I was a rotten son of a bitch. I'm damned if I know why you let me live here after de way I acted all dose years. You don't owe me nuthin', rather de reverse. You take your family, and you get in dat van and you head Northwest, before Rico Tubbs' homeys come knocking on de door, which could happen any minute now if you don't move your ass."

"I told you, you're my father," said Eli. "It's not about what kind of man you were, it's about what kind of man I am. I'm not leaving you behind."

He walked heavily back into the house. Lorna and Millie were sitting on the sofa crying and hugging Eddie. In all the stress and turmoil of the day, Eli had forgotten that Stash still had the .45. He was just nerving himself up to tell Eddie and the women that it was time, that Eddie needed to say his goodbyes and they needed to get the van loaded with the macabre black bags and get moving, when they all heard the gunshot. Lorna screamed. "Stay here!" Eli ordered them, and he ran into the garage.

"Stan the Man" Horakova had performed one last hit, or possibly his first, on himself. Eli would never know. His father's bloodied head was thrown back in the wheelchair, and the wall and ceiling of the garage was covered in dripping blood and gray matter. The gun lay on the concrete floor beneath the chair. There was still a lot of stuff left in the room from the days when it had been an actual garage, one of them

being a can of vermilion spray paint. Old Stash had taken the can and spray-painted one word on the back of the garage door: **"GO."**

* * *

The Horakova family pulled out of the driveway of the house on Kildare Avenue in the first thin light of dawn. They were driving a battered white van that was the last remaining relic from Eli's attempt, some years before, to start his own part-time electrical contracting business using the umpteenth re-finance on the house mortgage. Then Stash's kidneys had gone south and most of the capital went into keeping the old man alive.

The business had spluttered along for two years and then been shut down by the federal government for failure to meet OSHA standards, although that was just an excuse. It had long been the policy of the U.S. government to destroy any white entrepreneurial endeavor wherever it raised its head, either through regulation or taxation. The American ruling élite disliked and distrusted self-employed white people. They wanted everybody in the country working for a paycheck that could be cut off, if it ever became necessary to get a handle on someone. The two parties differed only on tactical details, not in their commitment to full economic control of the white population. Republicans wanted that paycheck to come from a large multinational corporation, whereas Democrats preferred that it come from the government. Democracy in America had long since been reduced to a matter of who controlled the patronage. It was Chicago writ large.

Eli carefully packed the van with the things he thought they would need, mostly clothes and the tools he and Eddie would need to earn a living in the new land. The first stop was an automated teller machine at the far end of Kildare Avenue, where Eli drew out $220 of the $227.15 in his and Lorna's joint account in $20 bills, the family's entire worldly wealth. With what they had on them, as well as the contents of Millie's pig, they had almost four hundred dollars, which would not be enough even for gas. But Eli had a large jerry can of gasoline he kept for emergencies, and this qualified. He also packed a siphon hose. "If

we run dry we'll just steal some gas," he told them. "Preferably from some Jew's Cadillac."

They headed northward on Interstate 90. Traffic wasn't too bad, and they were past Rockford and well into Wisconsin by noon. Eli did the driving. The others took turns beside him in the passenger seat so they could get some air; little Tommy sat on Lorna's lap, while the others sat in the back as best they could on the heaps of clothing and boxes of stuff they had packed. They watched the green forested landscape along the interstate go by in silence. They were all exhausted, no one had gotten any sleep, and the events of the past 24 catastrophic hours were finally starting to sink in.

Eli's father, the children's grandfather, was dead. Their home, the only home Eli himself and the children had ever known, had been torn from them in the blink of an eye because of a nigger's casual lust for a little white girl. They had known others who had defied the politically correct system, and those others had paid the price. Now it was the Horakovas' turn. Their names had been drawn out of the Mad Hatter's topper in the insane lottery of life under political correctness, and now they were to be hurled onto the burning altar of Moloch, god of equality and diversity, like so many others during the past century. No mercy, no appeal, just down the tubes. It was a quintessential American experience.

Once they got past Madison, Eli pulled off at a rest stop. The stop itself was long closed, due to some long-forgotten round of state or federal budgets cuts, but people still used it anyway to rest and to dump their garbage in a large landfill pit someone had dug out of the ground. There were several other vehicles pulled over in the parking area, all of them white motorists, fortunately. Eli was in no mood to deal with nigger or Mexican bullshit at the moment. The way he felt right now, if any of them approached him to beg or Mau Mau or steal, Eli probably would put a bullet in the shitskin's head from the .45 he kept in the small of his back. The gun had killed twice in the past 24 hours and Eli no longer cared if it killed again, just so long as it killed someone with dark skin. He had finally been pushed beyond the point of caring.

The toilets and sinks were no longer functioning in the restrooms, which were supposed to be locked, but someone had broken down the

doors, and people had been using the facilities anyway. In the summer heat, the stench inside was so powerful that the family all went off into the woods to relieve themselves. Then they had a breakfast of sorts, consisting of whatever immediately comestible items Lorna had found in their kitchen cupboard back in Cicero. This included several candy bars, a can of dried apricots, half a can of dried plums, several cans of Vienna sausages, and some cold Pop Tarts washed down with cans of soda. "Okay, it's time we all got some rest," decreed Eli. "The women and Tommy make themselves a bed in the back as best they can, Eddie and me will sleep in the front. It's probably best we do most of our traveling at night anyway."

They pulled into the most removed parking area in the rest stop and settled down for a few hours of restive, disturbed sleep. They were all awake by six p.m., and five-year-old Tommy was finally starting to get cranky. Millie kept him quiet by sharing a hand-held video game. Eli, Eddie, and Lorna looked at the road map of the United States he had brought, spread out on the side of the van. "We need to make our decision on where to try and break through the border," said Eli. "We're coming up to the fork in the interstates."

"Wyoming is the closest," said Lorna.

"Hey, maybe Dad and I can become cowboys," suggested Eddie with a faint smile on his lips.

"Agreed," said Elias with a nod. "Wyoming is the closest, but for that very reason it will probably be more closely watched by the military and the security agencies, since I-90 is the quickest route there from the Midwest. If we take I-90 and head west, we'll go through South Dakota's Black Hills country and hit the Wyoming state line, or what used to be the state line, in about 20 hours, depending on traffic, which would be great if we were tourists on vacation and we were taking the scenic route. But we're not, we're refugees running for our lives. Wyoming is technically one of the states handed over to the Northwest Republic by the Longview Treaty, yeah, but from what I can remember from the TV and internet news, it's still pretty wild and woolly out there, with some fighting still going on between the new white government and American forces, and also some of the local people who want to stick with the United States. We don't need to go

driving right into a war zone where we might get shot at from all sides. Also, I drove down 90 once, and I remember those badlands out there are really barren. I mean it's like you're on the fucking moon. We might run out of gas a hundred miles from the nearest help."

"So where, then?" asked Eddie.

Eli pointed to the map. "If we head north from here and we get onto I-94 west, we'll go through North Dakota and eastern Montana until we get to West Montana, or whatever the Northwest Republic calls it now it's their part of the state. There are some cities we'll have to go around, Fargo, Bismarck, Billings and Bozeman, and that might get a bit hairy with cops watching, but it also means we can get gas there and maybe a little food. The trouble is that at some point, most likely around Bozeman, the troops and cops will start getting really thick, and we'll need to get off the interstate and try taking the back roads around any roadblocks. That's where it will start getting funky. But the best aspect of using the northern route is that unlike Wyoming, in Montana there's a clear border, Interstate 15. I don't know if the highway itself is still being used by traffic at all, but once we're on the western side of it, we're in the Republic and home free. It's a finish line in this race for our lives, something we can shoot for."

"Let's go north and try for Montana, then," said Lorna. "I know the angels will help us, but we should also help ourselves as much as we can."

Before sunset, they pulled off at one exit and found a roadside market, one of the many unofficial bazaars that had sprung up across the United States in the past few years that paid protection to assorted cops and local authorities to be allowed to trade without licensing or regulation. Most of these markets were run by Middle Easterners, and they specialized in selling discontinued stock, or big box discounts, or whatever the current term was for stolen goods, especially cheap processed and canned food items, since food had become so expensive. The Horakovas were able to replenish their supply of Vienna sausages, beans, several boxes of crackers, and a block of processed cheese food one of the dusky Hindu traders had in an ice cooler. At Eddie's recommendation, Eli also bought a cheap burner cell phone that had the capacity to receive netcasts from CNN, Fox, and the major news networks. All the Horakovas had their

own phones, but Eli had forbidden their use and removed their circuit cards with the federally mandated built-in GPS microchip, lest they be used by the Chicago police or the FBI to track them down. Then they were back on the road.

They cut their available funds almost in half filling the van's gas tank in St. Paul. They were now about eleven hundred miles from Butte, Montana, a town split down the middle by Interstate 15. "In theory we should be able to get one more fill-up and make it," said Eli. "We could, if we were just driving down the interstate, like you could before all the trouble. Technically speaking, the Northwest Republic begins at Exit 227, where I-90 runs into 15. But there's no way they're going to just let us pull off and check into the nearest HoJo's."

Then began the long trip down I-94 through the darkness, through Minnesota and then across the broad, flat expanse of North Dakota. The silence in the van was broken only by the newscasts that Eddie found on the new disposable cell phone and put on speaker. He would try the Chicago internet stations for a while, to see if there was any news about what they had left behind in the house on Kildare Avenue, and then he would scan for news items or anything to do with border conditions ahead. "As near as I can tell from the news, the barbed wire and the barriers and the minefields are all on the American side, so once we actually get into Northwest territory we should be safe," said Eddie.

"After Billings we have to get off the interstate and find a way to get to I-15 by back roads, at night, and then cross over without being detected," Eli said.

The Horakovas noticed there were a lot of headlights all around them, almost all of them heading west. "I wonder how many of the people in these other cars are doing like we're doing and trying to get into the Northwest Republic?" asked Eddie.

"Quite a few of them, I suspect," replied Eli.

"Maybe we should all form a wagon train together like the pioneers did back in the old days," suggested Eddie.

"That's not a good idea," said Eli. "Those assholes in D.C. admit they're monitoring traffic on the interstate from satellites in space, and at some point down the line here, the cops and the military are going to

start straining out anybody they think might be trying to leave the joys of the so-called greatest nation on earth for someplace where niggers don't come into your house and try to drag your daughter away. We have to get as close as we can to the border and find a place where we can cross without being noticed. Eddie, ride the internet on that thing, and see if you can get some idea of what's going on in the border area, what kind of trouble we might be running into."

Finally, as the dawn broke, they crossed the state line into the plains of eastern Montana. Eddie and Millie and Lorna stared out the windows of the van at the vastness of the land under the rising sun; they had never been farther out of the city than the Forest Preserves, and they had never even imagined that such a huge amount of *space* uncluttered by brick or asphalt or concrete could even exist. "It's all *empty*," whispered Millie, staring out the back window of the van. "How are we going to find the Northwest Republic in all this?"

"Imagine what it was like a hundred and fifty years ago when the first pioneers were walking across these plains with Conestoga wagons pulled by mules and oxen," said her father. "A lot of white people have made this trip before us, Millie. We should have made it ourselves, long before we were forced to. Then we wouldn't have to be doing it now, like this, on the run and with only the shirts on our backs. I remember once, many years ago, I looked at one of the old Party web sites and that old guy was trying to tell people just that. I didn't listen then. I wish to hell I had."

Their first problem came that afternoon outside Billings, when they were pulled over by a Montana State Highway Patrol officer. Eli looked up and saw the flashing LED lights in his side mirror. He pulled over to the shoulder of the interstate. A tall white state trooper, about 30 years old, got out of the unit and walked up to the driver's side of the van. His name tag read *Cornwell*. "License and registration, please," he demanded laconically.

Eli produced them; fortunately, the registration on the van was up to date. "What's the problem, officer?" he asked, acutely aware of the cold metal of the .45 pressing into his back underneath his shirt.

"Where are you headed, Mr. Horakova?" asked Trooper Cornwell. To Eli's surprise he pronounced the family name correctly, the first time.

"We're on vacation," said Eli. "We're going to get on I-90 going south at Billings and drive down to the Little Big Horn to see the monument there. Where Custer fought the Indians. Pardon me, the Native Americans."

"I've heard of it, yes," replied the highway patrolman in a dry tone. "I'm just going to issue you a warning this time, Mr. Horakova."

"A warning for what?" asked Eli. "You still haven't told me what law I'm breaking, officer."

"The law of self-preservation," said Cornwell. "My warning to you is to quit being so fucking stupid, because you're going to get yourself and your family killed. You've got what looks like everything you own packed in this vehicle, and all of you have that blank poker face that any cop learns to recognize in his rookie year, the face that's a dead giveaway that you're up to something, and we both know what. You're not going down 90 East to commune with the spirit of Custer. You're going to get on 90 West, but you'll never make it. A few miles down from here, just after Billings, is where the army and the FATPO checkpoints begin, and if you try a moronic story like that with some of those men, they will drag you all out of the vehicle and shoot you through the head, including the little boy. It's happened before, and there is not one damned thing the Patrol or anyone else can do about it. Actually, by this time next week, anyone using any interstate highway at all in eastern Montana will need a permit. They can enter and exit only through checkpoints, and they have to file a trip itinerary with somebody, don't know who yet. New regulation from the highway czar in Washington, D.C. The government of the United States is a wounded animal, Horakova, the most dangerous in the world. My warning to you is to turn around and head back to Chicago."

Something made Eli decide to take a chance, or maybe he had just run as far as he was inclined to run. "We can't go back," he told the state trooper in a level voice. "Not ever."

"Why not?" asked the cop.

Eli jerked his head toward the back of the van where the kids were hunkered. "That's my son, Eddie. He's sixteen. That's my daughter, Millie. She's thirteen. Two days ago, a nigger carrying a gun and a semi-official badge from the Cicero Neighborhood Watch walked into

my home and tried to take Millie by force down to their clubhouse for a little rape and sodomy session. Eddie shot him dead. Originally the idea was for Eddie to try and make it Northwest on his own. My father was crippled, confined to a wheelchair, and suffering from massive kidney failure treatable only through dialysis, so we couldn't bring him with us, and I refused to leave him there at the mercy of those black and brown animals. That night, my father stuck a gun into his mouth and blew his own brains out. He did it to lighten our load, so all of us could make this trip together. We're not going back, Mr. Cornwell. Now do whatever the fuck you think you gotta do." Eli didn't mention that he had the .45 and Eddie was packing Rico Tubbs' Glock. He figured the cop could fill in the blanks for himself.

The trooper looked at the ground and sighed. "Jesus!" After a while, he looked up. "Okay, listen good, because I'm only going to say this once. You folks have to get off the interstate. I mean it; do *not* try to get past a checkpoint looking like you do. They will read you like a book. The McCurtain isn't just a fence, it's a whole network of obstacles and checkpoints and surveillance and patrols covering hundreds of square miles on this side of Interstate 15, and you're about to run right into it. Last I heard, the first FATPO roadblock is around Park City somewhere. You need to get out of Billings and take the northbound exit at Laurel. From there take County Road 532 up to Broadview, then get on state Highway Three going north. Then when it runs into Highway Twelve, head west. There are still a lot of patrols and helicopter surveillance even on Twelve, but it's a big country out there. On the interstate you have no chance at all."

"We got a pretty good map," said Eli. "We'll find our way."

"Twelve will take you right into Helena, or the American half of Helena, but don't do that," Cornwell told them. "The American sectors of Helena and Butte are crawling with Fatties, military police, FBI, and Blackwater contractors that the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center have hired as bounty hunters to stop white people from entering the Republic. A lot of people have been killed in the towns, trying to climb over the barbed wire or tunnel under the fence to get into the NAR sector. The Blackwater goons and the FATPO both just shoot to kill. The FBI likes to arrest refugees

so they can torture them, waterboarding and the electric chair and the bath of flies, the whole nine yards. For God's sake, don't let the Bureau catch you. They'll make your kids watch. They have been publicly defeated and humiliated by white men, and they are out of their minds with rage and hate. If you absolutely must surrender to anyone, try to make it local police or the MPs, although some of them are just as bad. Lotta Mexicans. Your best bet is to get a few miles away from Helena in either direction. Helena's smaller and there's fewer hostiles in that area. Then find some back road that will get you right up to the fence along the American side of I-15. You'll have to cut through, but be careful. Some sections of the fence are electrified now."

"They've got the whole interstate fenced off?" asked Eli.

"Yeah," said Trooper Cornwell in disgust. "For fifty years they couldn't put up a fence along the Mexican border to keep illegals out, but when it's a matter of keeping white people in, they can build the McCurtain and fence Montana in half, in nine months. Go figure."

"We got bolt cutters," said Eddie from the back.

"When you get to the fence, be careful," said Cornwell. "There are minefields in a lot of places leading up to it. Some of the minefields are posted with signs, some aren't, and sometimes they've got the signs up but no minefield. I can't give you any advice on where to try and break through. I don't know that part of the state well."

"Why not come with us, and cross over with us?" suggested Lorna.

"Can't," Cornwell told her. "I have to keep my nose clean. My ex-wife and my two kids are living in Pittsburgh."

"Oh, they wouldn't . . ."

Cornwell cut Lorna off. "Oh, yes ma'am, they would," he said bleakly. "They would indeed. We got a memo that made it very clear. That's all I have to say, except I still advise you to turn around and find some way out of your problems besides heading west. You'll probably be dead by this time tomorrow. Forget you ever saw me." Cornwell turned and stalked back to his patrol car.

"Was that an angel, Mommy?" asked Tommy.

"Maybe," Lorna told him.

"No, son," answered Eli. "That was just a good man who has been placed in an impossible position by this hellish country and this sick society we live in. Just like us, son. That seems to be America's specialty, destroying everything that's good in it. It's been going on for a hundred years now. Those people on the other side of that fence are trying to fix what's broken in the world, and that's why we have to get there." Eli pulled the van back onto the interstate.

They got lost only once following Cornwell's directions, and by midnight, they were coming into Helena on Highway 12. They passed a mileage sign that said *Helena 14.*

"How's the gas, Dad?" asked Eddie. "We're pretty much out of money."

"The dial shows we got about a quarter tank left," said Eli. "Better than I thought we'd do. We need to get off this highway. We could start running into military patrols or those private goon squads the cop mentioned any time now. This is where the dangerous part begins." He chose a side road at random and exited. A few miles down the road he pulled over into a stand of pines and killed the engine and the light. "I'm going to put the gas from the jerry can into the tank," he said. "That ought to do it for us, for better or worse. Give me a hand, Ed. Bring the funnel. You girls get out and stretch your legs. Hang onto Tommy's hand." They carefully drained the fuel from the can into the gas tank, and Eli tossed the empty can into the trees. He looked up at the star-filled sky. "Guess I know now why they call it Big Sky Country. Let's see how much I remember from my army map and compass training. That's the North Star, so we need to keep on moving west, in that direction," he said, pointing down the road.

"Dad!" said Eddie. "That sounds like a helicopter!"

"Get away from the van!" commanded Eli. "They may have infrared tracking equipment, which means that hot engine will show up like a Christmas tree on their scope!"

The family moved off at a trot up a small hill and lay down behind it, almost a hundred yards from the vehicle. A helicopter slowly settled down into the air over the little pine grove, hovering, and then a spotlight beam snaked from the chopper's belly, weaved around for a bit, and found the parked van. Eli couldn't see any markings at all on the

chopper. It seemed to hang in the air over the van below it for a long moment, like a scientist studying a specimen under a microscope, and then a chain gun opened fire on it in a stream of lead and tracer bullets. The van's gas tank exploded and a ball of fire rose into the sky, singeing the pine needles on the trees and hurling burning debris all throughout the stand. Then the copter rose lazily into the air and ambled off back into the sky.

"Those stupid assholes set the woods on fire," said Millie, staring after them. "They just don't care."

"They wouldn't have cared if we were in it," said Eli. "Maybe they thought we were."

"They didn't even try to find out," whispered Lorna, horrified.

"They probably have a quota of white people they have to kill every week, like cops have a quota of speeding tickets," said Eddie.

"Oh, Eli, everything we had in the world was in that van!" cried Lorna in despair.

"No, honey, everything we have in the world is right here. Tommy, are you okay?" asked Eli, reaching over and giving his son a hug.

"Bad men," said Tommy calmly.

"Yes, son. Very bad men."

"Now what?" asked Lorna.

"If I remember the map right, I figure we're about three miles from Interstate 15," said Eli. "We walk. We have to stay on the road because if we blunder around in the woods we'll get completely lost. It's risky, but we have no choice. I'll go first, then Eddie. Eddie and me will take turns carrying Tommy. Lorna, you and Millie follow us, and hold hands, to make absolutely sure you don't get separated. If somebody comes and I yell move, we get off the road and hide about twenty yards into the woods. We stay together at all times. Now let's go. Millie's right, those stupid bastards have probably started a forest fire here, and we need to clear out. Maybe it will serve as a distraction, although again, I think Millie's right. They don't seem to care what they do."

The family began walking down the road, away from the burning trees and the smoke. There was no moon, but the sky was clear and the stars overhead were bright enough to illuminate the two lanes of asphalt in a thin, ghostly light. Every now and then, they passed unpaved access

roads gleaming white in the half-light, leading off to the right or the left, and occasionally darkened houses and mobile homes on either side of the road, none of which seemed to be occupied. Twice vehicle headlights appeared, once behind them and once in front, and they scuttled off the shoulder and into the woods to lie in concealment in the scrub brush. The first vehicle was a private car of some kind. The second set of lights turned out to be a pair of Humvees containing men with M-16 rifles, moving slowly down the road. In the darkness it was impossible to discern any insignia or tell who they were, army, FATPO, Blackwater mercenaries, whoever. When they were gone Millie and Lorna took the last two small bottles of water out of their handbags and shared them around, making sure Tommy drank most of it. Then they trudged on.

Even summer nights in Montana were cold, and all their warm clothing had been in the van. No one complained, and Tommy did not cry. Eli's heart swelled with pride at his family's courage and hardihood in the face of an adversity that Americans weren't supposed to be able to meet any more. He began to get a glimmer of understanding as to how the rebels of the Northwest had done it, how they had thrown off the tyrant's chains. At the very last minute, just before the darkness descended forever, something had awakened in the white man. Eli could see it now in his wife and his children. Freedom was near. They could all feel it, sense it.

Eli had no idea how far they had walked, but at around three o'clock that morning they saw a glow of light ahead, and ten minutes later they were standing at a chain link fence looking down an embankment at Interstate 15 below. Now the McCurtain was literally a curtain of steel, through which they could actually see the Homeland. The roadside lights were still on, and they could see the empty highway below them clearly. "I remember from the news something they said about this border along 15," said Eddie. "Technically speaking the border runs down the median strip. The northbound lanes are on the American side and only American official and military vehicles use it, otherwise you have to have a permit. The southbound lanes belong to the Northwest Republic and they let anybody use it who wants, just remember it's at

your own risk because of all the gun-toting federal goons on the other side of the road."

"I don't see anybody," said Eli. "Our bolt cutters got incinerated in the van. We have to find some way to get through the fence." He looked up and saw a coil of razor wire at the top. "Climbing's out. We have to find someplace to dig under. Let's move along and see if we can find some kind of dip in the ground, but be careful. Remember what that state trooper said about land mines."

As they moved along the fence, searching the ground, Lorna said to her husband, "Eli, I don't know if this makes it any better or not, but Stash was right. There is no way we could have made it this far with him along."

"I know," said Eli. "It just pisses me off. I always accepted that one of the immutable facts of my life was that my father was an evil son of a bitch, and I was this really big man for turning the other cheek and taking him in, and not letting him die in one of those hellish state nursing homes. One of the few points in my plus column. Now as the last act of his life, Stash proves he was a bigger man than I'll ever be. Damn him!"

"You've got four other points in your plus column, Dad," said Millie.

"Thanks honey," said Eli.

"Dad, look here," said Eddie, pointing. By the dim light of the interstate lamps, they could see a small, grassy ditch worn by rain water drainage, about two feet wide and two feet deep that ran under the fence. There was about a foot of clearance between the jagged bottom of the chain link and the ground. "We can enlarge this."

Eli and Eddie both had clasp knives on their belts. They attacked the sides and bottom of the ditch with the blades, breaking up the soil, for about five minutes at a time, and then they and the women clawed at the earth, burrowing the dirt away with their bare hands and throwing it aside. Then it was back to hacking away at the ground with the knives. "You don't think this fence is electrified, do you?" asked Lorna.

"I don't hear any humming, and I don't see any joint boxes or ceramic fittings or connectors," said Eli. "We may have lucked out, honey. Just dig this out enough for us all to slip through, then we dash

across the highway and we're free. I doubt we'll be the only white people showing up in the Northwest with nothing but the clothes on our backs. As long as Eddie and I can work, we'll make it. But we have to get this done before the sun comes up. If anybody does see us, we'll be sitting ducks in the daylight."

They dug away like lunatics, even Tommy helping to carry the soil, and slowly the hole under the fence grew bigger. It was on a downward slope, and so if they could just get the aperture beneath the fence deep and wide enough, they could get through. But dawn comes early in Montana in July, and by the time the hole was sufficiently enlarged, they could see without the need of the stars or the highway lights. "Okay, Millie first, then we hand Tommy through to Millie," said Eli. "Then Lorna, then Eddie, and me last." Eli was a large man, and the hole wasn't quite big enough for him, and so for another five minutes he had to chop away with his knife and dig with his hands, but finally all five Horakovas stood erect in the dawn on the other side of the fence.

Lorna looked across the highway. The countryside there looked no different from what they had just left, scrubby brush and low stunted pines, but they all stared at it. "There it is," whispered Eddie. "Free land. White man's land. No niggers with guns from the Watch, no Mexicans, no junkies, no crooked cops beating us and robbing us, no Jews laying Dad off, no more of their goddamned laws and judges and creeps in suits telling everybody what to do and how to live. No more America."

"Let's go," said Eli. "Eddie, you carry Tommy." They slid down the embankment, onto the shoulder, and stepped onto the highway, just as a convoy of armored vehicles came around the bend from the south. The lead vehicle was a black Humvee with a mounted M-60 machine gun; behind it was an eighteen-wheeler, and behind that a truck, carrying armed men in black fatigues. The lettering on the side of the Humvee said Blackwater.

"They've seen us!" bellowed Eli. *"Run!"*

The family's sudden appearance caught the mercenaries by surprise, and they were almost across the interstate before the first machine gun and rifle bullets began snapping over their heads and cracking into the concrete. They leaped onto the soil of the Northwest American Republic and ran toward a small stand of pines, but the driver of the

Humvee apparently decided to ignore little niceties like an international border, and the vehicle swerved across the interstate and pursued them. *So close!* Eli screamed in his mind. *So close, and now these animals are going to murder my family for money! FOR FUCKING MONEY!* He whirled, whipped out the .45, dropped down on one knee and carefully emptied the magazine into the oncoming Humvee that was plowing up the low hill after them, trying to hit the driver. He must have hit something, because the vehicle swerved and stopped, but the M-60 SAW gunner opened up again. Eli remembered enough of Iraq to hit the dirt, roll out, then jump up running, throwing the empty gun away as he did so. He saw his family ahead of him, and they seemed to disappear. He reached the point where they had been and saw that they were down in a kind of ditch or gully. He looked back and saw that the body-armored mercenaries had de-bused from their truck and were running through the scrubby pines after them, fanning out. He jumped down into the wash and yelled *"Come on!"* to the others. "Eddie, gimme the Glock! I'll hold them off while the rest of you get into those trees!"

"Any last standing to be done, Dad, we do it together," said his son.

Eli realized that they were trapped in the dry wash. Surrounded by the enemy gunmen, the minute any of them poked their heads up they would be picked off. *At least we'll die in the Homeland*, he thought, bitter bile and rage rising in his throat.

Lorna, Millie, and Tommy were huddled against the wall of the dry wash, their faces white with terror. All around them the mercenaries could be heard, shouting and firing their weapons, maybe even shooting at each other. The gunfire seemed to increase, the rattle of the M-16s mixing with a more hollow, popping roll of automatic fire. *Goddamned Iraq all over again,* thought Eli, and then something hit him. "Yeah," he said out loud, puzzled. "Just like Iraq! Those aren't just sixteens, those are AKs!"

"What?" asked Eddie.

"AK-47s! I remember that sound!" The Horakovas heard the engine of a motor vehicle coming toward them, but from the western side of the wash. Then a man wearing tiger-stripe camouflage and a coal-scuttle helmet appeared over their heads about ten feet away, kneeling

and firing a weapon Eli remembered as an MM1 revolving grenade launcher. The shield on the side of his helmet was blue, white, and green. The soldier fired again and again, and they could hear the explosions as his projectiles slammed into the targets. Then a camouflaged Humvee drove into sight behind the soldier, on which was mounted a Browning .50-caliber machine gun, the muzzle spitting fire and thunder back and forth. For another minute there was shooting and shouting and then it all died away, leaving behind an eerie silence.

A man got out of the Humvee and walked over to the wash, where the Horakovas stared up at him. He was tall, and despite his light amber beard he seemed little older than Eddie. He wore tiger-stripes and a peaked Alpine cap, and on the cap and over his right shirt pocket was an eagle and swastika. He carried a Kalashnikov rifle on his hip, the sling over his shoulder. On one collar tab was a single black first lieutenant's bar, and on the other were the black embroidered letters NDF. "You folks okay down there?" he called. "Anybody need a medic?"

Eli looked at his family. None of them seemed to be hurt. "No," he croaked, shaking his head.

"We were shadowing those apes along the fire road on our side back there, and we saw you make your break for it," said the lieutenant. "Don't worry, they've all skedaddled back across the highway." He reached down, took Eli's hand, pulled him up to ground level and said, "Welcome Home, comrades!"

Eli Horakova looked down at his wife. "Lorna," he said, "I think we've found your angel."

VI

One Down, 999 To Go

(One year after Longview)

Northwest Broadcasting Authority
—Channel 7 (Missoula)
Daily programming for October 21

6:30 a.m. ..... Morning Farm and Ranch Report (Ministry of Agriculture)
6:35 a.m. ..... National News and Weather (Broadcast Center, Olympia)
7 a.m. ..... Good Morning Northwest (current events from Broadcast Center, Olympia)
7:30 a.m. ..... Good Morning Montana (local news, weather and features with Jenny Stockdale, Justin Richardson, and Craig Paul)
8 a.m. ..... Captain Kangaroo (black and white)
9 a.m. ..... Sesame Street
10 a.m. ..... Red Ryder (black and white)
10:45 a.m. ..... Blue Peter (black and white)
11 a.m. ..... Around a Northwest Garden
11:30 a.m. ..... Chess Master's Corner
Noon ..... The Edge of Night
12:30 p.m. ..... Coronation Street (black and white)
1 p.m. ..... Leave It To Beaver
1:30 p.m. ..... The Brady Bunch
2:30 p.m. ..... The Andy Griffith Show (black and white)
3 p.m. ..... Gilligan's Island
3:30 p.m. ..... Deputy Dawg (cartoon)

4 p.m..... After School Theater: Crossbow. The continuing adventures of William Tell and his band of guerrilla freedom fighters against their arch enemy, the Jewish governor Geisler.
5 p.m..... Walt Disney Presents: The Swamp Fox
6 p.m..... Local News and Weather—Jenny Stockdale
6:30 p.m..... National News—Broadcast Center, Olympia
7 p.m..... My Favorite Martian—Ray Walston, Bill Bixby
7:30 p.m..... Mr. Ed—Alan Young, Connie Hines
8 p.m..... Sherlock Holmes—Jeremy Brett
9 p.m..... Movie—Night of the Grizzly (1966)—Clint Walker, Martha Hyer
11 p.m. ..... News Roundup
11:10 p.m..... Movie: Day of the Triffids (1962)—Howard Keel, Nicole Maury
12:30 a.m. ..... National anthem, signoff

* * *

One year to the day after the signing of the Longview Treaty, the Northwest Council of State convened in the meeting room in the old Washington state capitol building in Olympia for a breakfast session. Red Morehouse chaired the meeting in his capacity as Vice President of the Republic. Outside, bright morning sunshine was quickly burning away the ground mist and dew. A clear first Independence Day was forecast.

The building was much quieter and more orderly now that the Constitutional Convention was concluded. "Right, comrades, we'll make this quick," said Morehouse. "Everybody got enough scrambled eggs and toast and coffee off the buffet? Or you can try the pancakes. My wife is down in the kitchen this morning, and she made them. They're highly recommended. Okay, we're all here except for the State President, who is in the air right now headed for Coeur d'Alene, as well as General Barrow, who is in Montana this morning, and Comrade Stepanov, who is down in Portland where he officially commissioned our new national symphony orchestra yesterday. I will be able to give

you a security brief, and we have Susan Russell here sitting in for Andrei, since we finally decided that broadcasting and entertainment were to be part of the Culture ministry and not have their own separate portfolio. For those of you who have not yet met her, Comrade Russell is the new director-designate for the Northwest Broadcasting Authority."

Susan Russell was an attractive woman in her mid-forties, wearing a neat business outfit of matching skirt, jacket, and shoes of the kind that had been *de rigeur* in corporate America under the old régime. Everyone in the cabinet room knew her story, since she had been discussed extensively prior to her appointment. The new NBA director was what had come to be politely termed a "specialist," as well as several less polite slang terms emanating from more irredentist Volunteers. A specialist was someone with technical or managerial qualifications whom the Republic needed to perform a specific function, but who had not served in the NVA or been involved in any kind of dissident activity during or before the War of Independence. Specialists were coming more and more to the fore in the administration of the new country, its economy, its technology, and in society as a whole. Sometimes they had been employed by the United States or a state government, and they had rendered at least lip service to the Union during the war. In a few cases such people had even been active Unionists in one form or another, who for whatever reason had stayed behind, and whose records at least did not include any outright murder, torture, or informing.

Susan Russell was presently the highest-ranking official of the new government who had no NVA track record. She had been offered the post because of her pre-war experience in running a major chain of Christian television and radio stations throughout the Northwest, her connections with the better conservative elements in the old Republican party whom the Political Bureau wanted to try and reconcile to independence under a new flag, and because of her work in the old days with a number of campaigns against obscenity and sleaze in television and entertainment. Susan was an evangelical Christian who had spent a night in sincere and anguished prayer before taking a position that necessitated an oath of allegiance to the Northwest Republic, committing herself to work alongside people she had once considered to be criminals and murderers. She did so because she wanted to continue with her life's

work of saving young minds from being corrupted by the nauseating filth that had spewed forth from America's airwaves and internet servers for almost three generations.

Her appointment had been greeted with sullen suspicion by some former Jerry Rebs, who viewed all evangelicals as Jew-worshippers. Her confirmation hearing in front of Parliament's newly established Communications Commission had been turbulent. She had been attacked as well from the pulpit and excommunicated from her own church for accepting a position in the NAR government by the American-based headquarters of her denomination, although the Northwest synod of the same denomination, men and women who knew Susan personally, had in turn told their brethren in Christ down in Houston to go sit on a nail, with appropriate scriptural references. She was catching flak and criticism from all sides, but she bore up with a dignity and unruffled calm that impressed Morehouse. "Thank you, Mr. Vice President, but you don't need to address me as comrade," Russell told him. "We all know what I was doing during the Trouble. I haven't earned that title."

"We have every confidence that you will, ma'am," replied Morehouse.

"By the way, we call it the War of Independence around here," growled Fiona Bonnar.

"Whatever it was, it's over now," said Morehouse decisively. "It ended a year ago today, in fact. Speaking of which, we all have places to be this afternoon for various ceremonies and dedications, hence the meeting at this ungodly hour. The Old Man says no statues or monuments for at least ten years after Longview, and none of him at all until he's safely dead and he can no longer fuck up, as he puts it. He says the best monument we can build to those who died is the Republic itself. That's all very well and good, and I think we understand the point he's making, but we were able to get approval for a few historical markers to be put up, before everyone forgets who did what, and where. These things need to be taken care of while memories are still fresh. At least with these plaque dedications the white race will finally be able to honor our martyrs, and there is no more appropriate day to do so than today. Let me make sure I have everybody's details straight. General

Morgan, you will be unveiling the plaque at the head of the I-205 Bridge in Portland, at the point where you led your men across onto the Oregon shore on November the first of last year, correct?"

"Three o'clock this afternoon," confirmed Morgan. "Carter Wingfield will be conducting a similar ceremony on the Portland side of the I-5 bridge."

"Comrade Ridgeway and Comrade Bresler will be representing the government at those ceremonies, since they are both Portland veterans," said Morehouse. "Comrade Bonnar will be unveiling the plaque at the site of the battle in Ravenhill, Washington, where her sister and our gallant comrades of the Olympic Flying Column died, along with SS Captain William Vitale and NDF Captain Lars Frierson. They're the closest thing to survivors of the Column available. They were in the scout car ahead of the main body, and so they were able to escape the ambush."

"I've never been to the site before," said Fiona quietly. "I haven't been able to bring myself to go. This will be my first time."

"Our hearts go with you, comrade," said Morehouse compassionately.

"And our prayers," added Susan Russell quietly.

Morehouse returned to his list. "The State President will be making a speech at the site of the Singer home, which has been turned into a small garden memorial after the Americans paved it over for a parking lot, and he will also be unveiling a marker at the old Seventh Street post office in Coeur d'Alene, where our people made their last stand against the Marines during the Sixteen Days. Tonight he addresses the first incoming class at the Northwest Military Academy in Sandpoint. I myself will be speaking at the site of Robert Mathews' death on Whidbey Island. The Americans built a Taco Bell there, but that has also been cleared away. Art, you're doing Sandpoint as well tonight, but this afternoon you will be dedicating a plaque out at the new Ruby Ridge National Monument and speaking to whoever cares to drive all the way out there, right?"

"The Guards are expecting at least a few thousand people to be there," said Flowers.

"Were we able to get Sarah Weaver to attend?" asked Morehouse. "I know she's in poor health."

"Afraid not," said Flowers. "The FBI got wind of it and they've arrested Sarah and her whole family. Their official line is it's simply a preventive detention to prevent Sarah from embarrassing Chelsea right when her impeachment trial over the Northwest is running into the home stretch. I talked to Frank, and he said let it go, so long as they release the hostages after today. We can't go to war over every little insult these bastards throw at us. If Sarah or her family are hurt in any way, then that's another story. Then we turn it over to Charlie Randall to deal with."

"Comrade Stanhope and Comrade Stepanov will be commemorating the Treaty signing at the Lewis and Clark Hotel in Longview," Morehouse went on, referring to his notes. "Which is ironic, in that during the negotiations themselves, they were on opposite sides of the table."

"Returning to the scene of the crime," said Stanhope, smiling. "In American eyes, anyway."

"Doctor Jennings is in Seattle, while Doctor Hassling and Comrade DeMarco will be joining General Zack Hatfield and his surviving Third Battalion veterans at Sunset Beach," Morehouse went on. "Comrade Salvatore will be in Spokane and Comrade Brennan will be in Boise. General Barrow is in Helena today, where he will dedicate the marker at the old American courthouse there, before we turn it into a Party headquarters."

"Was Frank able to locate any of Jack Smith's old crew?" asked Morgan. "If memory serves, there were what, five or six of the Regulators who made it out of that mess alive?"

"Eight, all told. Yes, he told me he found two of the column's survivors, a married couple named Stockdale, and they're going to say a few words at the dedication," Morehouse confirmed.

"Another quick question," said Morgan. "While we're out gallivanting all over the Republic, who's gonna be stayin' here and minding the store?"

"Our illustrious Minister of Agriculture," said Morehouse, as Farmer Brown raised his bullet-scarred hand with a grin.

"Please don't start any wars while you're in charge, Donnie," requested Stanhope gravely.

"You mean I can't invade Luxembourg?" asked Brown in disappointment.

Morehouse chuckled. "Before we all head out, I just want a quick rundown from all of you updating us on what's happened since last week. I'll kick off on the security front. Regarding the question you asked last week, Art, BOSS is currently holding about twelve thousand open files throughout the entire Republic, which all things considered, out of a population of almost fourteen million people is pretty damned good. Almost all of it is petty bullshit, drunken bar talk, possible suspicious associations during the war, but nothing provable. Just people that gut instinct tells the trenchcoat boys we need to keep an eye on. Of those open files, only twenty show any sign of possibly being genuine espionage cases. The Americans don't seem to have gotten their act together yet as far as setting up a humintel network in the Republic, which is good. Or else they have, and we simply haven't caught any spies yet, which is bad. We're not sure which. Frankly, BOSS has to become the most professional and efficient agency at what they do in the government; our very racial existence depends on it. Patrick, how's the assimilation situation?"

"The current population of the Northwest Republic seems to be around fourteen million, as you mentioned just now, Red," said Brennan from Race and Resettlement. "The first census is scheduled to begin in June, but since it's strictly voluntary, I don't know how accurate it will be. In other words, we have roughly what the population of our present territory was ten years ago, but there has been a significant demographic, social, and economic realignment. We've factored out the large number of non-whites who fled from the Northwest during the War of Independence, mostly from the large urban areas along the I-5 corridor, and also the Runaways from the past year since the Longview treaty. Looking at the white figures under the last American census only, we figure about half of the Republic's present population was here ten years ago, and all the rest are incomers from the United States, Canada, and all over the remaining white and Western world. This is a good thing; it means that over half the population of the Republic

has committed an affirmative act of loyalty simply by coming here, at greater and greater risk to themselves over the past year, as the United States and Canada have more effectively sealed off the border with the McCurtain. The fact that the Americans and Canadians are so worried that their own remaining economically and socially productive white populations will flee to the Republic tells us something."

"Where are most of the newcomers from?" asked Dr. Hassling.

"Mostly from the U.S. and Canada, including the future Aztlan as part of the U.S., which technically it still is," replied Brennan. "After that, the next largest group is from the U.K., which isn't surprising. Britain is slated to become the first European country that goes majority non-white, and anybody with two brain cells to rub together is getting the hell out, to anywhere they can. Then comes Germany, and after that South Africa. Then Russia, which is a bit of a surprise. Finally comes a hodge-podge from all over Europe. We're sure there would be a lot more from Australia than there have been, but the Aussie government has passed a full asset confiscation law affecting anyone who can be shown to have a family member who is residing here. They wiped out every one of Charlie Randall's relations they could find and literally kicked some of them out onto the street as an example."

"How's the housing sitch shaping up?" asked Morehouse.

"Good," said Brennan. "The Runaways have left behind more than enough abandoned housing, so we're not running short yet, but we're working with Commerce and Industry to plan a building program which should begin next year. When our inheritance runs out, as Comrade Ridgeway puts it, we won't be caught short. New white immigrants are arriving in the Republic at the rate of around 50,000 per month, most of them without American or Canadian exit visas, despite the increasing danger of running the McCurtain, and we project those numbers will increase. We still have two very large cities we need to fill up, of course, Seattle and Portland, but we are encouraging our newcomers to take a good look at Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and the eastern part of the country as a whole. We don't want to end up like we were under the U.S., with a densely populated coast hogging all the goods and services, contrasted with a virtually empty interior. That's bad in the long run, economically, socially, and militarily."

"The rotating seats of government should take care of some of that," said Morehouse. "As you know, our new Parliament begins its first formal session since the election here in this building on November the first, and a lot of the government departments will be concentrated here in Olympia because they'll need stability to function, but Parliamentary sessions will be rotated on an annual basis between here, Salem, and Boise, using the old state legislative buildings in each former state capitol. We will be relocating the ministries of Food and Agriculture to Spokane, Energy up to Seattle, Education out to Missoula, Commerce and Industry to Portland, and Race and Resettlement itself to Boise. There will be other decentralization projects as well in the years to come. That way we spread the employment and administration, and hopefully slow the growth of the kind of massive bureaucracy and the Beltway mentality that characterized the United States. Not to mention the military advantage of not having one single capitol city for the enemy to knock out. John, how's the border situation?"

"We're still losing two or three men in border incidents every week," reported Morgan. "The NDF and the Guards don't like it, as I think I've made clear in past meetings of this Council, but the consensus seems to be that it's acceptable when faced with the alternative of a full-blown war with the United States in our first year of existence as a Republic. If it's any consolation, we're giving better than we get, and the Americans are losing more men, not that they give a damn. The worst part is the casualties among the white refugees. It's hard to get an exact estimation of how many people are being killed trying to escape into the Republic, because they've clamped down on their media big time, and almost none of the incidents are even publicly reported any more. Unless an incident is actually witnessed and reported by someone on our side of the line, we have no way of knowing about it. My guess is maybe as many as a hundred people per week are being intercepted before they get to the border. They're arrested and sent to the secret prisons the Americans have established, or else they're killed trying to cross the McCurtain by mines, booby-traps and electrified fences, or else simply gunned down. The ADL and SPLC mercenaries are the worst offenders since they get paid by the head, literally."

"General Randall is arranging a major strike in the next couple of weeks that will take out a large part of the upper echelons of the ADL and SPLC both," Morehouse informed the cabinet. "Hopefully the survivors will get the message, but our real problem from now on is going to be this new Office of Northwest Recovery thingummy that Chelsea Clinton set up as a kind of political bribe to stave off impeachment."

"Is she going to be impeached?" asked Fiona Bonnar.

"Looks like she's going to have her mommy and daddy's luck with that," put in Stanhope. "I still have some people back in the District who will talk to me, and they think she'll clear the trial vote next week by two senators. The régime knows that a major assault on Israel by at least eight Muslim nations is coming, and the Jewish lobby has decided they don't want to change horses in midstream, so they're backing Chelsea with every hold they've got on the Senate, bribery or blackmail or threats, no holds barred. They will expect her to be appropriately grateful when the shit hits the fan over Tel Aviv."

"I doubt she'll win over the senators from Washington, Idaho, Oregon, Montana and Wyoming," commented Interior minister James Salvatore with a chuckle.

"No," said Stanhope, shaking his head. "Part of the deal as well is that she signs off on a Senate resolution giving lifetime seats to all the remaining senators and congressmen from our states from the last election under the U.S., so that's one solid anti-Northwest bloc that will be in Congress until they croak."

"Gary, how's your home town doing?" asked Morehouse. "You'll be down there later today. Did we make the deadline?"

"We did," replied Bresler with satisfaction. "The second thing we will be celebrating in Portland today is the completion of the reconstruction program. Except for certain shelled-out or burned-out buildings that we decided to leave as historical markers and reminders, the city is now one hundred percent restored and functional. Not so much as a single cartridge casing lying on the street any more. The president promised the people of Portland that we'd get the city rebuilt within one year of the last shot being fired, and we made it with thirteen days to spare." There was a round of appreciative applause

from the other cabinet members. "You should thank Ray," said Bresler, nodding to his fiscal colleague. "I still don't understand how he came up with the money."

"I had Charlie and the boys knocking over liquor stores back in the States," said Ridgeway with a wry smile. "On my end, the currency changeover is on schedule, and folks in the Republic will be spending their last legal U.S. dollars on New Year's Eve. We've officially pegged the credit at par with the dollar on international exchanges, in case anyone is paying attention, and the official rate here in the Republic will remain at one-for-one in the month of January, after which we'll let it float and see how it does. The euro, the pound sterling, the Canadian dollar, the ruble and so on will reflect their U.S. dollar value at first. The best thing someone in our position can do on the monetary side of an economy is simply let everything find its own level. Economies are living organisms, and sometimes I swear I think they have a brain of some kind. I think the Northwest credit may drop a bit as soon as we de-regulate, but in view of the fact that we're headed for a highly productive economy with full employment, one that actually *makes things*, it shouldn't be too long before one credit is worth five or ten dollars or more. We've been able to put almost a hundred million credits into circulation so far in the form of gold, silver, and platinum specie, and about five hundred million in banknotes. That's actually not much for a country our size, but I want to control the injection of capital into the economy and match it with genuine need and demand. Can't just start printing money like we're Zimbabwe niggers."

"Bart?" asked Morehouse. "National transit plan almost done?"

"Almost, thanks to the Labor Service and those thousands of eager new immigrants looking for work the moment they set foot in the Republic," said DeMarco. "We've managed to get all the Republic's existing rail lines back into service after the Americans let almost all of them rust away. Major rail trunks have all been upgraded for high-speed traffic. The rail bridge over the Columbia at Portland is now up again, and it can handle six trains at a time, so you can now get from King Street station in Seattle to Republic Station in Portland in a little under an hour. Daily commuting between home and work from Seattle to Portland and vice versa is now a practical possibility, and

that's something the United States never accomplished." This comment sparked more applause.

"Refresh my memory. Didn't that used to be Union Station in Portland?" asked Art Flowers.

"Yeah, but we changed it, for obvious reasons," said DeMarco. "You can now get to and from any inhabited area within the Republic of more than five thousand people, within one hundred yards of your destination, with no more than four transfers by combining bus and train, or Northwest Air. When the plan is fully functional, we'll have that down to full coverage of anyplace over 300 inhabitants with only three transfers. Ridership of Northwest Transit is way up. Now that there are no buses and trains full of violent niggers, Mexican gang members, drug addicts, and advertisements depicting sexual perversion, white people are leaving their cars home more and more. Expensive gasoline has a lot to do with that as well, of course. No question in my mind we will turn a profit in our first full year of operation."

"Outstanding!" said Ray Ridgeway.

DeMarco continued, "Northwest Air is now running a network of flights covering a total of forty destinations within the Republic, although a lot of those are small prop job flights out of the larger airports. No commercial airlines from outside the country are landing here yet except for Aeroflot, which we're lucky to have or else we'd be completely cut off from the rest of the world. I think we may be able to lure Aer Lingus here soon. Private charters from the U.S. and Canada are running so regularly that they might develop into scheduled flights if the Americans allow it."

"Aren't the Americans cracking down on the charter flights?" asked Morehouse. "I know some of the ones based in California now effectively amount to commuter airlines."

DeMarco jiggled his hand in the air. "Mmm, here and there, but they don't seem to have figured out exactly what they want to do about this whole blockade thing, even as they're establishing the McCurtain and shooting people who try to run the border. The fact of life they're having to work around is that there are a lot of Americans who have ties here that involve legitimate family and business reasons to travel in and out of the Republic, as well as citizens of other countries, and if they

interfere too much, it has political and PR repercussions. It pisses people off when they can't send Aunt Sadie in Seattle a Christmas card, or go to their high school reunion in Spokane, and eventually that will generate blowback. It looks like ZOG is planning to back off on the whole total no-contact, blockade, illegal-to-come-here-at-all attitude. They've set up an exit visa and permit system, and they are now allowing limited legal entry into the Republic through a small number of border posts along the McCurtain, mostly on the interstate.

"There's all kinds of restrictions, of course. You can't take your whole family, you can only bring in two hundred dollars in cash or traveler's checks, and you have to file an itinerary that includes everywhere you're going and everyone you're planning to meet and why, and if you don't check back out again within 48 hours of your mandatory return date the FBI comes knocking on the doors of your next of kin. There are other restrictions and a long list of contraband items you can't take into the Republic, and all kinds of bureaucracy, which we all know isn't going to work worth a damn."

"Joe, how are the phones?" asked Morehouse.

"I still think we need a separate Communications portfolio in the cabinet here, so my ministry can concentrate on vital R&D, but Northwest Telecom is now fully functional within the Republic with both land lines and cellular phone networks," said Jennings.

"Northwest Telecom is a statutory body," said Ray Ridgeway. "We need all of those outfits up and running successfully ASAP, because they constitute our main substitute for income and property tax. How soon before we see a profit?"

"Couple of years," said Jennings. "I still say cell phones at least should be privatized and taxed. Frankly, we just don't want to mess with it. The more each government department has to deal with, the more bureaucrats we have to hire, and we know where that road leads."

"The Security Committee and the Political Bureau are twitchy about letting any private parties get too much control of the nation's communications," said Morehouse. "Yeah, we do know where that leads. That's how the Jews were able to slip the noose around America's neck in the last century. Speaking of electronic communications, Comrade Russell, I read over your NBA development plan. Both

the State President and I are impressed. I'll have copies of the plan for the rest of you to look over at next week's Council meeting, but basically it calls for the Republic to be producing all our own television programming within three years, and churning out our own movies within two."

"No more Gilligan's Island re-runs, then?" asked John Morgan. "Shucks, now I'll never know if they git rescued!" There was laughter.

"That pilot program for kids you have running now, *Crossbow*, looks really good," DeMarco told Susan. "I saw the first three episodes. Where do you shoot that? It sure looks like Switzerland."

"Leavenworth, Washington," Susan Russell told him. "They have a kind of German section of town there that they used to run as a tourist attraction. We throw in stock footage of Swiss scenery and merge it into our own scenes using a special computer program."

"You've got some good actors," admitted Flowers. "Of course Erica Collingwood is going to upstage anybody anytime she's on camera, since she's a heroine of the revolution in her own right, [see *The Brigade*] but that bruiser you've got playing William Tell is also pretty impressive. And who's that lovely girl who plays Inga?"

"That's James C. Marshall and Kelly Shipman, both of whom have worked in Hollywood," replied Susan. "We're getting a lot of actors coming to the Republic now, from Hollywood and New York, because the word is getting out that there's plenty of work here, and it's possible to be a real actor without all the lefty politics, the drugs and perversion, and the bad racial atmosphere. I've spoken to Minister Stepanov about a Shakespeare and Restoration drama company that can perform the classics both on video and in live theater, but I believe we need to prioritize children's and young people's programming at first, because we have to start forging a new healthy generation of white children.

"*Crossbow* is the first series put out by an NBA subsidiary, Asgard Productions," she went on. "We have other After School Theater projects in the works, and by early next year our animation department will be producing our own cartoons. I'm afraid the ancient sitcoms will still be around for a while. I know we need adult programming as well, of course. Our acquisitions department is scouring the world's broadcast

archives from America and Europe, television and movies both, and digging up anything that's clean enough and racially healthy enough to use here. Where necessary, we steal digital copies off servers outside the country. Then there are some programs and films that can be rendered usable by a little creative editing, like *Blue Peter*, and we have a revision department working on those. One of the current projects is cleaning up *Sesame Street*, getting rid of all the non-whites and lefty propaganda, giving Bert and Ernie girlfriends, so forth and so on, while leaving behind the good educational parts for toddlers. Adult programming is more difficult, such as most crime and police dramas, since we don't want anything that idealizes or makes heroes out of American police or FBI. Of course, everything Hollywood and the American industry turned out for half a century was riddled with Jews, Marxists, and sexual deviates on all levels, but sometimes all that's necessary is to cut a few lines here and a scene there, and remove all the Jewish names from the credits."

"Wait until we get Lighten Up on line," said Joseph Jennings.

"What's that?" asked Morehouse.

"Lighten Up is a computer program with which we can ethnically cleanse Hollywood movies and TV programs," said Jennings. "We can replace nigger and mud characters with white synthetic characters. Some of them will be used multiple times and given names like they were real actors. Or we can use digitized versions of real white actors. You have a smart-ass nigger like Will Smith or Wesley Snipes in the lead, he can be replaced with Rutger Hauer or Viggo Mortensen, complete with synchronized voice matching dialog. Or conversely, if you've got some really sleazy white villain in a movie, you can turn him into Ving Rhames or Jackie Mason."

"While helping ourselves to the rest of a fifty-million-dollar Hollywood production, technology and production quality and technique we can't possibly match yet. The mind truly boggles," said Morehouse with a chuckle. "Fi, are we healthy yet?"

"All the old hospitals are up and running, although short-staffed," reported Fiona Bonnar. "All Northwest communities are now served by clinics with at least one doctor, although they're mostly staffed with nurse practitioners and paramedics. The new medical schools at the

national universities in Seattle, Pullman, Eugene, Spokane and Missoula will start their first classes within a few months, although we're going to have to stagger the academic year for a bit. The National Ambulance Service is now in place, so the days when a ride to the emergency room cost seven hundred dollars are over. On the downside, medicines and medical equipment of all kinds are in short supply, and there is a bad shortage of parts for X-ray, EKG and CAT scan machines, things like syringes and sterile gloves, supplies of every kind. Our blockade runners are doing wonders, but it's still problematic. Minister Bresler and I are working on a plan to establish manufacturing plants in the Republic for most of the small items, but the really hi-tech parts and supplies still have to be imported."

"Once the trade credit bank is established I think we will be able to start serious importation of medical supplies and gear direct from the source, Fi," said Ridgeway. "It will be breaking sanctions and exposing vendors to risk, it will have to be surreptitious for a long time, and we'll be paying through the nose, but when someone is willing to pay over market price for something, there will always be someone willing to sell. The capitalists are spot on about the profit motive in human nature."

"Joe, getting back to your department, I've been meaning to ask, how's your mad scientist project coming?" asked Morehouse.

"It's starting to get into gear," said Jennings. "We've established lab and plant facilities at the universities in Seattle, Missoula, and Eugene, and the word is getting out among the egghead community around the world that we are willing to look at and bankroll virtually any crackpot idea that any scientist or inventor comes up with, at least until it proves through research and experimentation to be a bust. Right now we have embryonic projects in anti-gravity, wireless energy transmission, genetic cloning of extinct species straight out of *Jurassic Park*, human longevity and half a dozen possible cancer cures the Big Pharm companies under the old order wouldn't bother with because it cost too much money, or else because they wouldn't have been able to make enough profit on 'em."

Dr. Paul Hassling spoke up. "The most important and top secret are our energy-related projects, especially nuclear cold fusion, but we're also

going to be able to come up with working prototypes of two compact, inexpensive, and efficient new engines, one alcohol and one methane. That will be within the year."

"Both of which fuels we can manufacture, rather than import," Bresler pointed out. "We can turn corn and potatoes into alcohol, and pig and chicken guano into methane. Small quantities at first, and to be sure, not enough completely to eliminate the Republic's need for fossil fuel yet. But we can make enough fuel and convert enough of our energy production to take the edge off at least, and eventually we will have no need for petroleum imports at all."

"Anything else so urgent that it can't wait until next week?" asked Morehouse. "Right, then we all need to get on the road, except for Comrade Minister Brown here, who gets to plunk his butt down in the presidential chair for a few hours." Morehouse stood up. "Comrades, we have kept the Republic free and moving forward to a glorious white future for one full year. Quite a feat, one those bastards who spent the past century trying to wipe us off the earth never thought we'd accomplish. That's one down and nine hundred and ninety-nine to go. I'll see all of you back here on Friday, and we'll start to work on year number two. *Freedom!"*

Part Two

The Empire Strikes Out

Cascade, Idaho

The oak and poplar trees grew tall around our mountain farm,
With corn in the fields and alfalfa in the barn.
Word came over CNN and Fox News to our door,
The NVA in Coeur d'Alene had started up a war.
Our days of living good were short, and little did we know,
We'd be driven out by murderers from Cascade, Idaho.

Rebels shot some federal man, Johnson was his name,
Someone called the Hatecrime line and they held us to blame,
They kicked our door one morning as the sun was rising red,
They caught my husband half asleep and shot him in his bed.
Someone had called us racists, and that's all they had to know,
Those murderers came to our home in Cascade, Idaho.

They dragged me out and beat me bloody so I would confess,
They pointed guns at both my kids and threatened them with death.
We got no trial or jury, just a single rubber stamp,
That shipped us to Nevada, to the Hawthorne FEMA camp.
We lived in tents in summer heat and freezing winter snow,
We won't forget those murderers in Cascade, Idaho.

The war was done, and finally we got our homestead back,
But we know well they're waiting on the border to attack,
It won't be like the last time when you brutalized my sons,
'Cause now my boys are old and strong enough to hold a gun.
So come right on, you bastards, and before you die, you'll know:
We won't be driven out again from Cascade, Idaho.

—**The Next Generation**, popular NAR folk group.
Hit song from the year of Operation Strikeout.

VII

Things Moving In The Shade

(12 years, four months and 20 days after Longview)

I must study politics and war that my sons may have liberty to study mathematics and philosophy.
—John Adams

"Come on in, Jeff," said General John Corbett Morgan. "Close the door." The big Kentucky mountain man's black beard and hair were now flecked with gray, but he was still impressive and bulky in his green and khaki NDF uniform, and the measurement of his barrel chest was still greater than his waist even in middle age. A tendency to trade off the top jobs between old NVA vets in the Northwest Republic's government had appeared over the past dozen years, and so John Morgan was now into his third year as NDF Chief of Staff here at Fort Lewis, Washington, while his old comrade in arms from Volunteer days, Carter Wingfield, now held down his old Council of State portfolio as Minister of Defense in Olympia.

Colonel Jeff Garrison, who now entered the office, was tall and mustachioed, a 35-year-old senior analyst from CMI (Combined Military Intelligence). He stood to attention, and saluted. "I got your latest update, Colonel," said Morgan. "I need to go over it with you, and I asked Air Marshal Basquine and Admiral Leach to sit in." Air Marshal Billy Basquine, in light powder blue, was the Luftwaffe's Head of Service or commanding general. "Bloody Dave" Leach in dark blue serge with an anchor behind the eagle and swastika on his uniform was now the Kriegsmarine HOS. Leach had been a former U.S. Navy sailor

before the War of Independence, he came from a traditional seagoing family, and after his stint as a Flying Column commander and then ramrodding Force 101 (what Force 101?) he returned to his original love, the sea. "Have a seat and tell us all what-all's got you so hot and bothered," said Morgan, with a gesture toward a chair.

Garrison sat down and plugged a thumb drive into the computer terminal on Morgan's desk before him. The computer was on a small intranet that connected only to the second workstation in the room, the plasma display screen on one wall, and a special underground fiber-optic connection the State President's own personal computer in his office in Olympia. The intranet had a new encryption code every month, and no connection wired or wireless to the internet or any other station, making it impossible to hack from the outside. Garrison authenticated himself to the terminal with a voice code, a thumbprint, and a retinal scan before the machine would accept and upload the data from his portable drive.

The upload was slowed down a bit by security scanning software. So far, there had been only one serious computer system hack carried out by the United States Office of Northwest Recovery against any network in the Republic's government, in the second year after independence. An American saboteur gained entry to the Bureau of State Security's main office, dressed in a Civil Guard officer's uniform. He delivered some genuine but routine paperwork to a secretary, then he dropped a smoke grenade that set off a fire alarm. In the confusion, he slipped a malware DVD into the machine on her desk which uploaded a destructive virus onto the system, but which also triggered an alarm on the PC. The spy was apprehended and shot trying to get out a window. His virus was nabbed and quarantined by the IT technician on duty, but it had already destroyed 80 percent of the data on the server. BOSS's ironclad practice of keeping paper copies of everything in actual, physical filing cabinets enabled the system to be reconstructed and brought back on line within a week. Not being able instantly to network everything at the speed of light, like the Americans could, definitely slowed things down in the Republic. But it also made data and facilities infinitely more secure. In addition, the extra time and effort needed to perform many procedures manually was conducive to more acute thinking and better efficiency.

The Republic had something the United States of America did not: filing clerks who actually knew how to file.

Garrison got into the computer and flashed several grainy images on the plasma screen. "To begin with, CMI has noticed several developments down south of the border over the past forty-eight hours that give us cause for concern," he told the officers. "As you know, we've been intermittently hacking the American surveillance satellite system for some years now, as well as the European and Chinese satellites. They all know we're doing this, they periodically figure out how we're doing it, and they either discover a way to interdict our hack, or else in some cases they disable a whole satellite if they can't get whatever bug we've put inside it out of the system. In some of those cases, thanks to our Technological Warfare Department and their brilliant egghead types, we have actually been able to reactivate some of these dead spy satellites and reprogram them to spy for us, to the great chagrin of the ONR and NASA."

"The Lazarus Birds," said Basquine with a chuckle.

"You got it, sir. These photos come from a Lazarus Bird, a satellite we've raised from the dead. We keep it focused on key points of interest in Aztlan. Unless the ONR's computer nerds have figured out some way to hack us in turn and dick with the images, these are legitimate."

"How likely is that?" asked Basquine. "I mean, how likely is it that ONR might be planting these images as disinformation?"

"Nothing is certain in the weird and wonderful world of spy technology, sir, but we've matched these photos, tracked the subjects and collated their sequences with other satellite feeds we're intercepting, and also with ground intel in California, and we're convinced this is the straight dope," Garrison told them. "Something is going on down there in the land of the hot tamale we need to be concerned with, no question."

"Okay, what exactly are we looking at here?" asked Morgan, staring at the pixilated images.

"The first series we see now was taken on Pier 84 and Pier 85 at the Puerto de San Diego Zona Alta Seguridad," said Garrison. "The vessels being unloaded are the Chinese freighters *Hangchow* and *PanAsian Star.* Those are two mega-freighters, the biggest class in the Chicom

merchant fleet, and they are offloading nothing but the same size container. Hundreds of them. One of our guys on the ground managed to get inside the perimeter posing as a wino. He was intercepted and badly beaten by *Asaltos* for his trouble—the place is crawling with them—but he managed to report back. The containers are being loaded onto flatcars and sent up to the El Cajon air base under heavy armed escort."

"Not surprising," grunted Basquine. "Virtually their whole air force is Chinese or North Korean. Nobody seems to be able to teach mestizos how to fly or maintain aircraft engines."

"A team of operatives managed to get close enough early this morning to snap this through a telephoto lens," Garrison told them. He clicked up the next photo, showing a long row of hangars with freight containers in the middle of a cracked asphalt street. There seemed to be a lot of activity, trucks, vans, and indistinct men in blue coveralls. Garrison brought up the next shot, which depicted the open bay doors of one of the hangars, and then he clicked up the magnification to maximum. Dimly visible inside the hangar was a long sleek metal craft on landing skids. Men on top of it seemed to be attaching a rotor.

"Helicopters," said John Morgan. "They're bringing in helicopters. A whole passel of 'em."

"Yes, sir, quite a passel," replied Garrison. "We've confirmed that is a Chinese Taipan Seven gunship, in the process of being assembled. We conjecture that the containers each carry a military helicopter, either all Taipans or more likely a mixture of Taipans, Dragonfly recon craft and possibly some transport copters as well. If each container equals one chopper, then our beaner friends down south have just acquired an armada of almost a thousand new aircraft."

"For what purpose?" asked Leach. "And what did the beaners pay for all those choppers with? Aztlan is just as perpetually broke as their cousins south of the Rio Grande. The chinks don't just give away firepower like that in exchange for a few oranges and cantaloupes laced with disease."

"I believe we can guess what they intend to do with their new toys, sir," said Garrison grimly. "Our computer hackers have checked incoming flights to LAX, and also into Mexico City, and there seem to

be a higher than usual number of young male Chinese nationals flying in over the past week, allegedly as business travelers or tourists."

"Those would be the pilots and crews?" suggested Morgan.

"We think so, yes, sir," confirmed Garrison. "Dispersed and carefully inserted into Aztlan to try and avoid detection."

"Our observers on the ground break contact and E&E okay?" asked Leach.

"Yes, sir. But this sudden influx of air power into Aztlan isn't the only item that's caught our attention of late," Garrison went on. "You gentlemen will recall that the status report for last month included a copy of some Pentagon e-mails detailing the combined summer exercise planned by the U.S. Army, Air Force, and Marines in North Dakota and eastern Montana? The one they call Operation Blast Furnace?"

"Yeah, they're rattling their saber like they do every couple of years," said Basquine. "They're always massing troops on the border and playing war games, testing our reaction. We move our own troops up to the border and have our own war games, and we make it clear that any time they want to come over and play with us, we're ready."

"That may be what they're doing this year as well, sir, but we picked up on something that's a little disturbing," said Garrison. "Earlier this year the Canadian government in Ottawa approved a really major chunk of budget for highway reconstruction, in theory all over the whole country. But the only place this makeover has actually begun is on two fairly insignificant rural roads, Provincial Highway 18 in Saskatchewan and Highway 501 in Alberta." Garrison clicked up a map onto the big screen. "They're re-grading, re-paving, adding multiple lanes, and strengthening bridges to bear greater loads. As you can see, both of those Canadian highways run more or less parallel to the U.S. border until 501 runs into National Highway 4 at Milk River, Alberta, right on our own border."

"You think the Americans may be reviving Operation North Star?" asked John Morgan keenly.

"Could be, sir, if President Wallace has managed to arm-twist the Canucks into going along with it," said Garrison.

"What's Operation North Star?" asked Air Marshal Basquine.

"Oh, yeah, I forgot, that was before your time, Bill," answered Morgan. "One of the Pentagon's invasion plans a few years ago was called Operation North Star. It called for moving a major force into Canada, rolling west fast and hard just north of the border, and then forking and slashing down into Montana and Idaho to take Kalispell and Coeur d'Alene."

"Rather like the Schlieffen Plan the Germans used in World War One to hit the French through Belgium on an undefended frontier," added Colonel Garrison, who was something of a military history buff. "The trouble was, the Belgians resisted and managed to slow the Germans long enough for the French and the British to react. If you're going to invade another country through a neutral nation, you need to make sure the locals stay neutral. Operation North Star fell through when the Canadian government of the time wouldn't go for it. They hate the Northwest Republic with a passion that amounts to insanity, but they also fear us. We're militarily stronger than they are, and Ottawa doesn't dare take us on alone. They know a large segment of the white population of western Canada wants to throw in with the Republic, and they don't want to get involved in a war where they might lose all or part of their western provinces."

"Could that reluctance on their part have changed?" asked Leach.

"Maybe," said Morgan, ruminating as he ran his fingers through his beard. "They've got a new prime minister now who has opened the gate to all those refugees from what used to be Israel, and in return the Jews have backed his government with every penny and ounce of influence and propaganda they can muster, which is still mighty considerable."

"That's what's most worrying," said Garrison. "Canada now has a million Israeli Jews and the U.S. now has at least three million, who are screaming at the top of their lungs for revenge because they blame the Republic, correctly I think, for undermining the American Middle Eastern oil empire to the point where it collapsed. When that happened, Israel lost their American lifeline and became unsustainable. In addition to which, President Wallace is coming up for re-election for his third term this fall, and he needs to be seen taking at least some steps to recover the Northwest, as per his campaign promises when he ran on that whole ONI spritz."

"One Nation Indivisible my ass!" growled Morgan. "But I have to admit, it worked. It not only got him elected, but he's kept up the drum beat, and with the Jews backing him he's managed actually to get some things done and halt the U.S.A.'s slide into complete chaos, at least somewhat. And he's built their military back up again after that series of disasters in the Middle East."

"One more thing, gentlemen," said Garrison. He clicked on the computer and brought up several documents from the United States Department of Justice marked *Top Secret*, which he followed with more documents from the Department of Defense.

"Jesus, you guys must have every janitor and cleaning lady who empties a wastebasket in Washington, D.C. working for you!" said Leach admiringly.

"It's more complicated than that, Admiral," said Garrison. "Sometimes people die to get us these documents. Their people, and ours."

"WPB get you most of this stuff?" asked Morgan.

"Some of it, sir, certainly. The Circus has a very good crew in place in the District, no question, but most of it's our own CMI ops," said Garrison.

"Two foreign intelligence agencies?" asked Basquine. "Don't you ever duplicate one another's efforts?"

Garrison nodded. "Sometimes, yes, sir, but that's a good thing, when we can confirm each other's intel. The only way a head of state like President Morehouse can ever find out how good his intelligence service really is, is the hard way—by having it fail him. Hence the duplication. The Republic uses both suspenders *and* belt. Anyway, the upshot of all these documents is that the old FATPO training school at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, is being re-opened and a large number of personnel from the Army, the Marine Corps, the six or seven secret police agencies, and a number of law enforcement agencies around the U.S.A. are going to be attending a six-week course beginning next week. They call this Operation Chain Link, and the whole thing is so hush-hush that the details and actual nature of the mission aren't even being committed to paper or computer drives. It's apparently only being discussed verbally by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the American cabinet,

and the White House. These picked personnel will be trained by former FATPO officers and FBI agents, and also by a number of former Israeli military personnel."

"They're reviving FATPO?" laughed Basquine. "Hell of a lot of good those sons of bitches did them during the war!"

"I remember, sir," said Garrison, a former NVA man himself.

"How many of them?" asked Morgan.

"About three thousand," said Garrison.

"If they were planning on invading the Republic, I think they know us well enough to get that they'd need a lot more than three thousand Fattie thugs with six weeks of training to keep us down," chuckled Morgan. "Thirty thousand of the assholes couldn't do it back in the day."

"No, sir," said Garrison. "But according to what we've been able to learn, General, this six-week event is actually an instructor's course. These first three thousand are being taught to train others. The main intakes start early in the summer, and will include drafts from what they call community activist groups, meaning non-white street gangs from the cities, as well as elements from the Mexican and Aztec military, including the Assault Guards. The documents also refer to the formation of Israeli expat units serving under their own officers, many of them personnel from the old Mossad and the Shin Bet secret police. Finally, there is to be a unit called the Sacred Band, named after a probably mythical ancient Greek force of charioteers and spearmen who supposedly were all homosexual lovers. Apparently, the purpose of this grotesque thing is to prove once and for all that so-called gay people can be military effectives, which will do wonders to nail down the gay vote for Hunter Wallace for the November election."

"And how many people will these main intakes consist of?" asked Morgan.

"They've budgeted and they're gearing up for two hundred thousand men, sir," replied Garrison quietly. "They are building a permanent paramilitary army of occupation for the Northwest, commanded by some of the most experienced killers and torturers in the world. I can't see them going to this kind of effort and expense if they didn't intend to use it."

There was a long silence around the table. "Jesus, John," said Leach after a while. "They may really be coming for us this time."

"I get a bad vibe offen this, boys," said Morgan, shaking his head. "Okay, here's what we do. First thing tomorrow, I want the entire strategic planning staff from all three services in the War Room. We will do a complete re-work of Plan Sixteen, based on the assumption of a combined American, Canadian, and Aztec full-bore invasion attempt sometime this summer, probably in June. These so-called war games of theirs are scheduled to begin on June twelfth, and I suspect those uniformed time-servers and bureaucrats in the Pentagon still remember enough basic military strategy to go for a quick victory in the summer and not let it drag on into a winter war, especially east of the Cascades. Nobody in his right mind wants to fight in Montana or the Sawtooth in the dead of winter and meet our best generals, General January and General February. We will re-work Plan Sixteen into Plan Seventeen on the basis of that assumption, and begin making our dispositions."

"When do we call up the reserves, John?" asked Leach.

"Not until we get something more solid. I have hopes that may come soon. There's an intelligence operation pending through the War Prevention Bureau. Colonel, thanks for your report, and I'll want to talk to you later about this information and make sure I understand all the ramifications. But right now I need to discuss something with my comrades here that's a bit above your clearance level. No offense."

"None taken, sir," said Garrison, standing up. "First rule of intelligence: no one can reveal what they don't know. I use it all the time." He saluted the officers and left the room.

Morgan turned to the other two. "I was at a security briefing at Longview House a couple of days ago," he told them. "Charlie Randall was there. He says good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, the Circus may finally have a shot at placing an asset of ours in the White House. Right next to the President of the United States himself."

* * *

At the same time the senior officers of the military were meeting at Fort Lewis, down in the capitol city of Olympia, a lieutenant in the

Civil Guard parked his alcohol-fueled private car and walked into a nondescript three-story office building on a quiet side street. There was no sign outside the building indicating its occupants or purpose, and all of the blinds in the windows were closed, despite it being a sunny, windy spring day outside. The Guardsman was alert and observant enough to spot the discreetly placed surveillance cameras covering the entire street, but otherwise everything was as quiet as a ghost town.

He walked through the front door and into the building's lobby, which was bare except for a desk behind which sat an elderly man in a shabby suit and tie that looked about forty years old. It was dark in the lobby, and the old man was reading a Dostoevsky novel in the pool of light cast by a green-shaded banker's lamp onto the desk. The young cop glanced up and saw some slits in the wall high above his head. He was reasonably sure someone was behind those slits covering the lobby with a rifle or automatic weapon. He walked up to the old man. "Good afternoon. Guard Lieutenant Robert Campbell to see the ringmaster."

He expected the old man to be impressed, but he merely pressed a button under the desk. "Wait here a minute. They'll send somebody to escort you."

"Aren't you even going to ask me for my ID?" asked Lieutenant Campbell, surprised.

"Son, anybody trying to sneak in here would have letter perfect ID, good enough to fool me, and good enough to fool a scanning machine," said the old man with a snort. "Our security system is simple." He flicked aside his blue serge jacket to show a pistol in a shoulder holster. "We're all packing. We make sure that anybody who gets in who ain't who or what he says he is, don't come out again. Beyond that, we don't worry much about it. We got the gods on our side."

Campbell had already spotted the blue, white and green Old NVA ribbon on the man's lapel, and even though it wasn't necessarily required by protocol to stand to attention in the presence of a former Volunteer, he straightened up. "Yes, sir, we do," he said. Then he saw a second ribbon on the receptionist's other lapel, all red and containing the tiny Roman numeral XVI. He gulped. "You fought in Coeur d'Alene during the Sixteen Days, sir?" he asked.

"I did," replied the old man. "Here's your guy."

A side door opened, and a young man Bob's own age in shirtsleeves and tie stepped out and beckoned. He did not introduce himself. "Lieutenant Campbell? This way, please. He's waiting for you."

"It's been an honor, comrade," said Bob Campbell to the man behind the desk, who was already back engrossed in *The Brothers Karamazov*. He and his escort walked through a bullpen office full of desks and battered metal filing cabinets that could have been found in a freight company or a factory, if all the clerks of both sexes carried guns in hip or shoulder holsters. "I've never met a Sixteen Days man before," remarked Bob to the escort.

"That's Gus Singer's brother, Al," the young man told him.

There was a short elevator ride, and Campbell found himself being ushered into the large but Spartan office of the legendary General Charles Randall, director of the War Prevention Bureau, or the Circus as it had come to be known, due to somebody in the NAR government who was a John Le Carré fan. Some also maintained that the organization's nickname came from the death-defying feats its agents performed on a regular basis.

Randall himself sat behind a large desk of varnished oak. He was not in uniform today, but wore a sports jacket and a loosely knotted maroon tie. He was a slim man in early middle age. His blond curly hair was beginning to pale at the temple, and some white hairs were now visible in his neatly trimmed beard. His desktop was almost painfully neat, with one in-tray and one out-tray, each filled with file folders. There was a black plastic telephone with multiple lines sitting on the desk that looked as if it had come from the previous century, and a green banker's lamp that might have been the twin of the one on the old man's desk out in reception. One wall of the office was lined with filing cabinets. Behind Randall's chair stood a Northwest Tricolor flag in a stand, and beside it a small sideboard on which was a large glossy photograph of the famous Hollywood actress whom he had married, as well as a number of photographs of their children. The story of how Randall had met the actress was by now enshrined in the new nation's mythology. He had supposedly seduced her and turned her into an NVA intelligence asset, and used her to carry out Operation We Are Not

Amused, which was probably the most famous and spectacular guerrilla action the NVA ever pulled off. [See *The Brigade*]

Campbell stood to attention and saluted. Randall flicked his own hand to his temple in casual acknowledgement and pointed to the chair in front of his desk. "Park it, Lieutenant." Randall was originally from Brisbane, and his accent was still heavily Strine. Campbell did so. Randall reached into a drawer, rooted around and pulled out a file. "Did you tell anyone you were coming here?"

"No, sir, I was instructed not to."

"Good," said Randall. "This entire meeting is covered by the Official Secrets Act. Neither you nor I are here. This building does not exist. All is a figment of an opium-eater's nightmare. If one word of it gets out via anything you say or do, I will have your guts for garters, and I am not speaking figuratively. Got it?"

"Got it, sir," confirmed Campbell.

Randall was glancing through the file in his hand. "No idea at all why I asked to see you?"

"None, sir, although I applied for WPB six years ago, when I completed my military training. That's as close as I can guess."

"You grew up in Missoula," Randall continued. "Your sister is former Northwest Volunteer Jennifer Stockdale, and your brother-in-law is former Volunteer Jason Stockdale, now Chancellor of the University of Montana. You completed your military service as a sergeant, you qualified as an expert marksman and demolitions specialist, and you were rated as fluent in Spanish, which is now necessary to operate anywhere in the United States, never mind Aztlan. At the conclusion of your two-year national service hitch you were offered an appointment to the military academy at Sandpoint, but you chose to go into the Civil Guard instead. At the same time you applied for both BOSS and the WPB. Why not become a regular, Lieutenant Campbell? First step to the SS. And why BOSS and WPB?"

"My reasons will probably sound a bit infantile now, sir," admitted Campbell. "The fact is that I always admired and idolized the hell out of Jenny and Jason's Volunteer service during the War of Independence, and I guess I wanted to show that I could have my turn as well at the

danger and adventure of covert ops in the service of the Folk, that kind of thing."

"That's commendable, comrade, not infantile. You passed the WPB entrance examination with flying colors, then six months later you withdrew your application before you could be assigned an intake number at the School of Intelligence," said Randall, reading over the file. "Why did you drop out?"

"WPB agents are not allowed to marry, and I decided to go ahead and start a family," Robert told him.

"Actually, that's not entirely correct," the Australian replied. "In view of the nature of our work and the high potential for catastrophic work accidents in this organization, WPB agents are not allowed to marry without *permission*, which is sometimes granted, if only as a necessity for maintaining a couple's cover when they're operating Out There. You say you withdrew your WPB application to start a family. Your people Christian? Or your wife's?" asked Randall.

"No, sir, I'm a National Socialist, and her family are traditional Catholics from Chicago who fled to the Republic a few months after Longview," said Campbell. "My mother-in-law is religious, and she's got an angel thing going. The rest of them go to church on major festivals like Christmas and Easter and Saint Wenceslas's day—he's the patron saint of Bohemia, and the patron saint of beer as well, which is definitely appropriate in my wife's family—and they pretty much ignore it the rest of the time. I understand that because of our racial need to re-fill the cradles, as the Party puts it, the Ministry of Culture has done everything possible to ease the stigma against illegitimacy, but nonetheless, I decided I was going to do things the old way and marry the mother of my child."

"Old-fashioned enough to give up a slot at SoI?" asked Randall.

Campbell took a deep breath. "No disrespect intended, sir, but when it came right down to it, I had a choice to go off spying and adventuring like the Scarlet Pimpernel on the one hand, leaving behind a young woman whom I loved and who would have been the mother of my son, or I could take a pass on the Pimpernel path, stay home, and take responsibility for Millie and Bob Three. That's my son's name, Robert Campbell the Third. I'm not sorry I went into the Guards instead."

"Where you did quite well," said Randall, perusing the file. "Your station commander in Missoula recommended you for detective after two years on the beat. And there is not a bloody thing wrong with deciding to come home to a wife and child every night instead of hiding in some fleabag furnished apartment in Atlanta waiting for a phone call, or strangling some drunken ex-Fattie in an alley in Houston and taking his wallet to make it look like a robbery to throw the cops off. The Way of the Pimpernel is very much overrated. You understand I wouldn't be asking all these personal questions if it weren't relevant?"

"Yes, sir. May I ask what this is all about?"

Randall closed the file and dropped it on his desk. "All right, but before we get into that, Lieutenant, I want to tell you a couple of things. To begin with, just to grab your attention, there have been some recent intelligence developments that may indicate the Northwest Republic is facing a full-scale invasion by the United States, Canada, and Aztlan with substantial military help from the People's Republic of China. Probably within the next few months."

Campbell's blood ran cold. "The real thing this time? Not just more posturing and war-gaming and grab-assing on the border, sir?" he asked.

"We think not," said Randall. "We think this time they're coming to destroy us, kill anyone who had anything remotely to do with the Party or the War of Independence, deport most of the Republic's population to work camps in the southwest and in Mexico itself, and enslave the remaining white population of the Northwest. Soviet-style internal passports and work permits, political loyalty boards without whose approval no one works or eats, federal regulations dictating what you can eat and what you can drive and what you can think, masses of armed niggers and beaners wearing federal badges patrolling the streets of Portland and Seattle again and doing whatever they want, to anybody they want. This time it's the real thing. They're coming for us, and soon. I am telling you this first, so that you will understand that everything I have to say to you is deadly serious and vitally necessary to the survival of this Republic and to the survival of our race on earth. Because if we lose the Republic, Lieutenant, that's it for us palefaces. Liberal think tanks in New York and Washington are already talking

about what they will do when they succeed in destroying us. They call it eliminating racism through eliminating race, by using science and medicine. Mandatory sterilization, along with compulsory interracial marriage and breeding for those whites who aren't sterilized. Get the picture?"

"I get it," Bob said.

The Australian went on. "The second thing you need to understand is that there is not a bloody thing romantic or adventurous about what we do in this department, although you've got the dangerous part down right enough. A lot of what we do is dishonest, treacherous, unpleasant, and in some cases downright vile, which is the nature of the spying game. We have to work with our hands up to our elbows in the backed-up toilet bowl of the soul which is the United States of America, or in some cases Canada, where the only difference is the evil men and women who rule in the Jews' name say 'eh' a lot. I say this, Lieutenant, because the job I have for you is one of the bad ones. It is nothing short of filthy."

Campbell scowled. "Sir, I have two children and my wife is pregnant again, and now you tell me that the Americans are coming to make sure that those kids either die a horrible death now, or else they grow up to be slaves and junkies and whores. If I can stop that by jumping into a backed-up toilet, then I'll get as filthy as it takes. What, exactly do you want me to do?"

"I want you to be a presidential pimp," said Randall.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Bob, completely at sea.

"Let me break it down for you, Lieutenant Campbell," Randall said. "The normal WPB course at the School of Intelligence on Whidbey Island is nine months. The day after tomorrow at 0600 hours, I want you to report to the SoI, where you will be rushed through a special ten-day course which will spend about fourteen hours per day teaching you the absolute bare essentials of what you have to know in order to be one of the Republic's spies and external enforcers."

"You want me to complete a nine-month course in ten days?" asked Campbell incredulously.

"Got it in one, mate. We need to shove you into the game head first, right now. Once you get your ten days of training, you then get a false

U.S. passport and a false American FLEC card under a new identity. You will be issued another FLEC card when you arrive on station in Washington, D.C. Station Cesspool."

"What?" asked Campbell, bemused.

"Station Cesspool," repeated Randall. "Nickname for our D.C. operation, like calling the WPB itself the Circus. The lads call New York City Station Shithole, for the same reason. You're right in the belly of the beast in both those stations, up to your neck in a toilet that hasn't been flushed in about two hundred years. Since you grew up in a sane white society, the things you will see and experience there may well drive you clinically insane. It's a problem we have with our ops Out There. Sometimes they just can't take it any more, and they go bonkers in spectacular ways. You can't go bonkers, though. You have to stay focused on your mission."

"Which is what?" asked Campbell.

"How much do you know about the President of the United States, Hunter Wallace?" asked Randall.

"Uh, just what I read in the papers," said Campbell. "The guy's a scumbag white traitor, but that's a given, as if any other kind of person could be elected to office in the United States. The last honest politician the United States ever produced was Andrew Jackson. I think I read somewhere that Hunter Wallace started out on the internet back in the 'teens, as a false-flag blogger and a black op under the old Cass Sunstein Cognitive Dissonance program. He gathered information for the régime and for the régime's NGOs like the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith and the Southern Poverty Law Center, for money. As a reward for his cyber-services he was given a staff job in D.C. on some liberal Congressman from Alabama's payroll, and the rest, as they say, is particularly repulsive history."

"Go on," said Randall with a smile.

Campbell shrugged and complied. "Worked his way up to the point where he was actually able to steal the Alabama Congressman's seat from him, and from then on Wallace never looked back. He had just entered his second term when the War of Independence ended at Longview, he saw his bandwagon coming a mile off, and he jumped on it. From then on he was Mister Reunification. His rap is an interesting

combination of liberalism, neo-conservatism, and Christian Zionism all rolled into one. He calls it One Nation Indivisible, and it's basically the social program of the Clinton Democrats, the unfettered economic buccaneering of the Wall Street banks, combined with the American Exceptionalism of Rush Limbaugh and a heavy dash of 700 Club. I know that doesn't sound possible, or even coherent, but Wallace wraps it all in a big red, white, and blue American flag and he pulls it off somehow. Everybody gets most of what they want, or they think they do. Wallace's one-note symphony for some years has been We Must Recover Amurrica's Lost Jewels of the Northwest, punish wicked racism, and make everybody love and bugger one another under Old Glory regardless of race, creed, color, or species, all the while singing Kumbayah and praising Jesus. I know it's a lot more complex than that, sir, but that's what I hear."

"Not bad," said Randall with a nod. "Pretty much tells the tale, that does, but there are some things you don't know. Hunter Wallace made a decision very early on in his life that he was going to make his fortune as a *shabazz-goy*, a Gentile gopher for the Jews. He wasn't recruited to work for Cognitive Dissonance on the internet, he volunteered. He heard about the program when it was leaked to the media as far back as 2010, when he contacted Cass Sunstein and pestered him until Sunstein took him on. Wallace is a wretch, but he's no fool. He made a conscious decision at an early age that the Jews had the capacity to dispense to him the wealth and the power he craved, and he would do what he had to do for them in order to get it. He's never wavered from his decision since, and he's been well rewarded for it. He has always been in Hymie's hip pocket. Right now, his handler for the Tribe is his White House press secretary, a former journalist named Angela Herrin, real name Herrenstein, born in Israel. Now, what do you know about the illustrious Leader of the Free World's, uh, practices I suppose you'd call them, with women?"

Robert frowned. "I know Wallace isn't married, and part of his public persona is to be seen in public escorting all kinds of movie stars and female celebrities to political functions, public social events, concerts, baseball games, that kind of thing. Seems to me I read somewhere he actually charges money for his campaign committee and his private

slush fund to escort somebody's daughter or wife to a public do and get their picture in the media. Is that the kind of practices with women you mean, sir?"

"Uh, no," said Randall carefully. "Bloody hell, I guess we *are* doing a good job in cleaning up the Republic's moral culture since the Revolution, if a lad of twenty-six has to have it spelled out for him. When I was your age, mate, our minds were right in the sewer all the time, so we didn't have far to fall. Anyway, President Hunter Wallace has a medical problem. Has had since he was young, same problem a lot of white males of his generation have due to eating industrially produced and chemically enhanced food as a child and the general level of pollution and environmental contamination with every toxin under the sun that exists in the United States. Hunter Wallace suffers from what's known as hypo-gonadism, which is a fancy way of saying his nuts are the size of pencil erasers, his sperm count is three or four on a good day, and it's impossible for him to have normal sexual relations with a woman. And so he does what any rich and powerful American man does who can't have normal sexual relations with a woman: he has abnormal ones. I won't get into exactly what he does, since I just ate lunch. You will be briefed on that when the time comes . . ."

"*What?*" asked Campbell incredulously. "Look, sir, how can the sexual perversions of the President of the United States be relevant in any way to some mission I have to undertake for the Circus?"

"They are, I'm afraid," sighed Randall. "This is where we get into the bad part. Look, mate, I'll tell you what I want you to do, and it's bloody important. It may be able to help us turn away this invasion we think is coming. But I'll say this up front: what I'm asking of you is a bloody filthy thing, and if you want to say no and walk right out that door, you're free to do so. I could order you to do it, but that wouldn't be any good. You'd hate every minute of it, you'd resent the hell out of the Circus for making you do it, and you'd probably blow the mission, and that's not an option here. If you cannot in conscience help us with this, Lieutenant, then we'll find some other way."

"Uh, sir . . ."

"Right, I seem to be having difficulty getting to the point, probably because I don't really want to," said Randall with a sigh. "Wallace

goes through women on a regular basis about every six months, most likely because that's all most women can stand. Our D.C. Station is able to monitor internal White House communications via e-mail and phone—a lot of them, anyway—and we know who Hunter Wallace has set his sights on as his next conquest, I guess you'd call her, only in his case it's more a command performance. She's twenty-two years old. She's got some half-assed patronage job as a publicist at some K Street political consulting firm, one of those American gigs where liberal birds with the right connections can draw three hundred grand a year for doing bugger all."

"And she has the right connections?" asked Campbell.

"She does. Prominent Washington family, liberal Democratic pedigree going all the way back to Hubert Humphrey. Wallace saw this Sheila at some political drinky-do and apparently fell head over heels in lust. If he follows his regular pattern he's got about a month left with his current 'personal services assistant,' which is the term they use at the White House for the boss man's bit of all right on the side, so he should pension her off with a cushy job at the Pentagon or the EPA or something and make his approach to this new girl in about four weeks, say mid to late April. Before then we need you to approach this woman, connect with her, and persuade her to work for us, to pass information to the Circus from right inside the White House itself, literally pillow talk with the president. If he talks at all, which we don't know. We need you to act as this woman's handler, collect her raw intel and pass it on, keep track of her progress and keep her focused, keep her morale up, and keep her from going off the rails in the light of what this bastard Hunter Wallace will be doing to her in bed, which I repeat will be bloody abnormal and enough to make a dog vomit."

"Yes, sir, you're right. It's a repulsive assignment, and yet getting an informant right next to the President of the United States is clearly something the Republic has to do. I'm in. And now the big question," continued Robert, "Sir, why on God's green earth do you need *me* of all people to do something like this?"

"Because you know the girl," Randall told him steadily.

"Huh? I mean, sir?" asked Robert, gaping, uncomprehending.

"Her last name is Halberstam, but that is her Jewish stepfather's name," Randall told him. "She was born in Montana and you knew her as a child. You knew her as Georgia Myers."

VIII

World War Three Versus World War One

(12 years and five months after Longview)

Ten soldiers wisely led will beat a hundred without a head.
—Euripides

The Northwest American Republic's government had long pondered how best to establish a War Room to respond to any existential threat. The problem was that any such locale would be an obvious priority target for an enemy strike, with the subsequent risk of decapitating the NAR's defense command. The government vetoed suggestions regarding a bunker, because of its obvious negative historical connotations for National Socialists.

In the long run, the Northwest military decided that the best defense was to have as little centralization as possible, and to train every unit in the Northwest Defense Force to function independently within certain overall strategic parameters, right down to the squad level. Every Northwest soldier, sailor and airman knew his part of the overall war plan, the latest version being Plan 17. If they were cut off from command, they would do their best to implement it, with whatever came to hand. The NDF had a number of tricks up its sleeve to maintain command communications during an invasion, but it would not set up that one single head that might be cut off. The United States had never been able to defeat the Afghan freedom fighters, in part because there was never any head to cut off. The Taliban's command structure consisted of nothing more than a couple of bearded old men sitting on

mats drinking tea in a hut somewhere in the mountains. The NDF was more technologically advanced, but it aimed for the same effect.

Until the enemy bombs actually started falling, though, a special War Cabinet group had been established. It met regularly in the capitol building in Olympia, at Fort Lewis, or at various military installations. This special inner circle consisted of the State President, the Minister of Defense, the Minister of Security, the NDF Chief of Staff and the Heads of Service from the army, the Kriegsmarine, and the Luftwaffe, plus whatever other ministers of state, military officers, or specialists needed to be included.

In late March, there was one such meeting at the Air Defense Command in Centralia, Washington. It actually did take place in a bunker, one which had been built in order to monitor test launches of the Republic's rocket-propelled V-3 Flying Bombs. The meeting site had been chosen because it contained a small guest lounge inside it that looked like somebody's oak-paneled basement rec room, with a working fireplace: the Northwest in late March was still cold and wet. This afternoon the officer's mess had sent round a large tray of sandwiches and an urn of coffee, and eight men sat on sofas and armchairs in a haze of smoke that would have gotten all eight of the participants severe prison time in the United States, since tobacco was completely prohibited now in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. In addition to Morgan, Leach, and Basquine, there was President Henry "Red" Morehouse; Security Minister Frank Barrow, who was the longest-serving cabinet minister in the same position; Defense Minister Carter Wingfield; the General of the Army, Billy Jackson, and Colonel Jeffrey Garrison from Combined Military Intelligence.

"How's it looking?" asked Red Morehouse hopefully, opening the meeting in mid-munch. "Any chance we've misread the signs, that we're just paranoid and overreacting about all this?"

"I'm afraid I still have to agree with Colonel Garrison's assessment, Red," said John Corbett Morgan grimly. "Looks like this time they really are coming."

"Well, we all knew that someday they would," said Morehouse sadly. "And yet somehow I'd always hoped against hope . . . *God damn them all to hell!"* he suddenly shouted angrily. There was a short silence.

"I apologize, gentlemen. That wasn't helpful. Tell me what we know so far."

"We have a name, Mister President," said Colonel Garrison. "They call it Operation Strikeout."

"They don't see the obvious double edge in that?" asked Morehouse with a grim chuckle. "What if they're the ones who strike out?"

"They seem confident they won't, sir," said Garrison soberly.

"Yeah, they're confident, all right," confirmed Morgan. "Goddamned arrogant, in fact. Well, they always were. The tech warfare boys are now hacking and tapping every satellite and computer server they can, we're accumulating a mass of ground-level intelligence off field agents from both CMI and WPB, and they all tell the same story. This is it. We just don't know exactly when and exactly how, although a very nasty picture is shaping up."

Garrison nodded. "Training and preparation at a dozen bases from Fort Bragg to Fort Sam Houston, from Fort Riley to Huachuca and Castillo del Pueblo in Aztlan, a number of small and apparently insignificant troop movements on various pretexts that always seem to slide in a general northwesterly direction, materials and supplies and support services being moved and concentrated in certain areas, big consignments of weapons and ammo and equipment churned out of the defense contracting factories and vendors, gasoline and diesel fuel being stockpiled, all kinds of secret meetings and coded communications and lights burning late in the Pentagon and across Washington, D.C., in both the literal and figurative sense. A whole pattern of activity that can't be explained away. Stuff they really seem to be trying to keep secret, like the degree to which they're beefing up the Canadian highway system parallel to the NAR border. They're now using the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to stay on schedule with the construction, with the men dressed in tattered civvie overalls and all their bulldozers and vehicles painted bright fire engine red. Trying to pretend they're ordinary Canadian road crews, eh?"

"How many troops do they figure to move through Canada against us, and where do we think they'll strike south?" asked Billy Basquine.

"We figure at least one hundred and fifty thousand, sir," replied Garrison. "Three full army corps, including at least two armored divisions and one airborne division to jump in ahead of them and secure key points in the Kalispell and the northern Idaho Panhandle area. Then once their beachheads are secure, they'll move south to Boise or west to Spokane."

"Do they really think they're fooling us?" asked Morehouse, shaking his head in wonder. "Frank, are you getting any chatter from La Cesspool Grande that indicates just what the hell they think they're doing? Why *now*? Why not ten years ago when we were newborn and couldn't possibly have defended ourselves against a full-scale invasion?"

"A number of factors were in play back then," said Barrow. "The United States was in utter turmoil, remember, reeling from defeat after defeat. First there was the violent loss of the Northwest, then the quasi-legal loss of the Southwest when Chelsea folded like a lawn chair in exchange for the votes of six Hispanic senators in her impeachment trial, then the loss of their oil empire, and finally the loss of the very fly-blown jewel in Zion's crown itself, the so-called Second Holocaust when Israel went down. Plus they lost the only really strong leader they had, Hillary Clinton, when our guys went all *loup-garou* in that hotel in Denver. The Sea Hag's sudden demise left America rudderless for a while, which was good for us. It's taken Wallace almost eight full years to get the country stabilized and returned to some semblance of normality.

"The American military was in even more terrible shape than some of us remember it back in the day when we were kicking doors in Tikrit or chasing Mad Maxes in Libya or whatever we all did," continued Barrow. "It took time for the U.S.A. to pull itself together, and let's give him his due, that nutless wonder Hunter Wallace managed to give it more than a lick and a promise. Through a razzle-dazzle combination of charisma, bribery, and backstabbing, Wallace's One Nation Indivisible movement and his so-called national unity government have gotten all the other Amurrican shitheads from across the spectrum, everybody from the Delmar Partman Society on the neocon right to Hillary's Heirs on the loony liberal left, to pull together in their common interest and make sure the United States of America didn't completely fall apart, as

it most likely would have if left to its own devices. Now Wallace wants re-election. He's already had his two regular terms, and he'll get his Congressional resolution suspending the Twenty-Second Amendment just like Hillary did. He's pulled the country away from the brink, and what's left of the U.S.A. has now returned to a faint semblance of the old time of abundance, with massive inflation, true, but at least good enough to keep up appearances. It won't last, though, and Wallace knows it. America still doesn't manufacture hardly anything it needs, nobody has any real jobs any more, and the U.S. dollar is now essentially worthless because the régime keeps the printing presses over at the Federal Reserve running night and day. Inflation in the U.S.A. is starting to approach Zimbabwe standards. His mortgage moratorium, which the pasty little bastard copied from us by the way, wrecked the banks to the point where he had to pump them up with the Federal Reserve's printing presses for the umpteenth time.

"Now gas is twenty-one dollars a gallon in the States, and a loaf of bread is fourteen bucks. Wallace saved a lot of people's homes by shitcanning their crushing mortgages, true, but in most of those homes these days, the fridge is empty. Even if meat wasn't banned now in the States, nobody could afford a pound of hamburger in inflated dollars. The economy is set to crash again, worse than it did in 2009, and it could happen any time now. Wallace urgently needs a rabbit to pull out of a hat, and it's time he fulfilled his last and ultimate campaign promise, recovering the lost states of the Northwest, so people will be so busy cheering that they won't notice the fact that the American economy is finally, at long last, about to go down for the count. He needs to do it before the ONI convention in August, or at least look like he's doing it, with an ongoing military campaign. Add to that the presence of three million Israeli Jews who have all been given automatic citizenship right off the jumbo jet from the burning ruins of Tel Aviv, and who are screaming for revenge, and I think we can see why he's decided to go ahead and make his move."

"John, what kind of preparations are they making now, that we know of?" asked Carter Wingfield.

"The thousand or so Chinese helicopters that they slipped into Aztlan, or tried to slip into Aztlan without our knowing about it, are

now being dispersed all over the northern counties of California and Nevada, to small airfields and forward military bases they may think we don't know about," said Morgan. "Those Taipans have a long range, and they can strike pretty much anywhere up and down the western seaboard and most of the eastern interior as well. Worse still, we have received confirmation that at least six American aircraft carriers and their escorts of destroyers and frigates are now converging on the west coast of North America out of their bases in Hawaii or coming up from the Panama Canal, ultimate destination unknown. Our crystal ball boys like Jeff here think they'll be assembled into a naval task force and then head north."

"Christ, it's not going to be a seaborne invasion, is it?" asked Morehouse. "They planning on hitting us from every angle?"

"Maybe we ought to put Zack Hatfield on coastal defense and see if he can pull off another Battle of Sunset Beach," said General Billy Jackson with a smile. [See *The Brigade*.]

"No, the Americans don't have the troops for that, Mister President," said Colonel Jeffrey Garrison. "Remember back twelve years ago, when Chelsea Clinton was facing impeachment after Longview? One of the trade-offs she was forced to make to survive, in addition to agreeing to the establishment of Aztlan, was that the United States abolish the draft for the second time since World War Two. It was a politically popular move and also an astute one. The simple fact is that the United States of America is a society that no longer *dares* to conscript an army. They don't let civilians have guns any more, and the power élite aren't too thrilled with the idea of millions of draftees of all colors and weirded-out mindsets learning to use them. Too many of the patchwork of minority and special interest groups they have to draw on are of dubious loyalty. They don't trust white conscripts because they might be secretly sympathetic to the Northwest Republic, they don't trust Hispanic draftees because they're probably secretly loyal to Aztlan, and they don't trust the blacks because *nobody* trusts niggers with guns, just on general principles.

"The upshot of it is that we're facing an enemy military which is much smaller than it was twenty years ago at the height of the Oil Empire, higher quality and better trained to be sure, but at least they

can't overrun us with a mass horde of twenty million cannon fodder like they were Persians or Chinese. We believe that the entire American combined invasion force will number somewhere around four hundred thousand men, including the naval attack group and their air force, and in addition there may be as many as half a million Mexicans attacking from California and Nevada in the south, but the Hispanic troops are very much inferior by way of arms and training and morale."

"That's still almost a million men invading our country. Any possibility of active Canadian participation?" asked Wingfield.

"Maybe, but their army has never been that big, and they may try and sit this one out until we counterattack into Canada," said Garrison. "On the upside, I think there's no question that we can win this. For one thing, during the first stages of the war, we're fighting defensively on interior lines, and the perceived wisdom is that an attacking force needs to outnumber the defenders by at least four to one to have any hope of success. Either that or have some extreme technical or logistic advantage, which with the Americans for the past century has traditionally been overwhelming air superiority. If Bluelight pans out, the Americans will lose that in the first forty-eight hours. On our side, the population of the Republic is now up to around twenty-one million people, many of them refugees from the United States and other politically correct countries who remember what life under PC was like, and who understand what it will mean for them and their families if we're conquered. The Republic is a nation of soldiers. If we mobilize our entire active reserve and everybody who can hold a rifle, from the Civil Guard to the B-Specials to the Young Pioneers, we can field almost five million combatants. We'll have the bastards outnumbered, and we'll be on interior lines."

"And they will have almost all the high-tech weapons systems and gadgets, like we've never been able to afford to acquire," sighed Carter Wingfield. "If Bluelight can't bring down those damned jets from where they hide in the sky at thirty thousand feet, then it will be World War Three against World War One."

"They will be counting on their high-tech toys to give them the edge, yes sir," agreed Garrison. "But remember, we have some tricks up our own sleeve, like Rotfungus and Bluelight, and I'm convinced

both of them will work. We have the Sunburn missiles to deal with their naval assault force. Plus we have enough V-3s to drop some nasty choky stuff on California that will disincentivize the beaners real quick. Not to mention the fact that the people of the Northwest Republic have lived free and white for over a decade now, and they've acquired a taste for it. I know part of General Barrow's remit as Security Minister is to keep track of the national mood for the government, and I don't know what he will say, but my guess is that the Americans will find themselves invading a very large country with a well-armed and very pissed-off population, who will fight to the death rather than return to the slavery and the poison that was the United States. I don't mean to go all mystical on you here, gentlemen, but this will be a war of the human spirit against the machine, and I'm just mushy enough to believe the human spirit will triumph. It's going to be a bloody mess, comrades, but we're going to win."

"Unless that lunatic Wallace decides to nuke us when he sees he's losing," said Leach sourly.

"Or unless the ching-ling-dings decide to send something more than helicopter and jet fighter pilots," said Basquine.

"Any chance the Chinese might try to get involved with a major ground force commitment?" asked Morehouse.

"No chance, Red, we're certain of that," Barrow told the group. "For one thing, the Celestials may be inscrutable, but they aren't stupid. They saw how America got bogged down in foreign conquests when they went into lands where they were never meant to be, and they don't want the same thing happening to them. Nor do the enemy want them here. The Triple Alliance of America, Canada, and Aztlan, as we have named them, think they can take us on their own, and none of their governments are nutty enough to invite a major Chinese ground force into North America. They know once that happens they'll never be able to get rid of the chinks. They remember what happened when America kept invading Muslim countries and staying, staying, staying for decades on end."

"So why the naval task force, if not to invade?" asked Morehouse.

"Air support from the carriers for the three-pronged ground invasion we think is coming, to try and destroy our manufacturing

and infrastructure and population centers along the old I-Five corridor," replied Morgan. "Looks like they'll be sending troops against us from Aztlan in the south, from the east through Montana towards Missoula, and from Canada in the north, down into Idaho or Montana, or both. Plus airborne drops all over the country on the first day to secure crucial points."

"Not go long and slash straight down from Vancouver towards Seattle?" asked Morehouse. "The would seem to be a logical fourth prong to an invasion."

"We don't think so, sir," said Garrison. "For one thing, they simply don't have enough combat troops. For another, they're afraid we will retaliate against Vancouver. Prime Minister Simoneau is very twitchy about that possibility. The tell on this is that they're not rebuilding and reinforcing the roads all the way into B.C. Our prognostication at the moment is they will concentrate their naval air assault on Seattle and Portland and points west of the Cascade mountains, to try and bomb us back into the Stone Age, as they like to put it, and the northernmost strike force will cut down east of the mountains towards Coeur d'Alene and Kalispell, then maybe try and do some kind of convergence with the eastern invasion force against Boise."

"Why not Wyoming first?" asked Leach.

"We think that will come in the second wave, so to speak, once hostilities have begun," said Morgan. "Wyoming has always been the Republic's hinterland, our own odd man out. Kind of a frontier preserve. Very hard, old-fashioned and independent people. The Party minds its own business out there and they tolerate the Tricolor over the post offices, that kind of live-and-let-live thing. Wyoming folks understand the need for national service perfectly, they agree with it as good for young people's character, and we've had less trouble with draft-dodging out of Wyoming than anywhere else, but beyond that we've walked softly out there and let the cowboys roam the range, and I think we'll find that will pay off now that trouble's coming. The cowboys don't want to go back to the bad old days any more than anyone else in this country does.

"As to the invasion, Wyoming sort of juts out there on the map, and it looks like a vulnerable appendage that can be severed from the

Republic, true, but our war gamers believe that for the Americans to concentrate a major initial attack on Wyoming would be a mistake, and they understand that. They don't want to lop off a limb, they need to go for the vitals right away. It's a big place, with an implacably hostile population and terrain that make it ideal for guerrilla warfare, almost like America's Afghanistan. It would be very easy for the first wave invasion force to get bogged down out on those plains, far from any of their major objectives. Trying to come through Wyoming would increase the distance they have to travel to reach the major eastern cities. Most likely they'll try to roll up Wyoming in a second wave of less than front-line troops, maybe use National Guard and these Operation Chain Link baboons, once they've captured their major objectives elsewhere in the country."

President Morehouse spoke. "Getting back to naval defense, Admiral Leach, can we do anything about this American armada that will be coming in at us from the Pacific?"

"Depends on how far out to sea the carriers are when they launch their aircraft, Mr. President," said Leach. "My guess is that will be fifty miles, at least. They're leery of our shore batteries; our Russian friends have given us enough Yakhonts missiles on mobile launchers to make them skittish. We can and we will try and get at them with our missile destroyers, with TAC boats, and U-boats, and punchies, and everything else we've got. But even with our souped-up marine engine technology, sea travel is a lot slower than air, and they'll know we're coming. Our navy will have to slug it out with their ship-based copter gunships and dodge surface-to-surface missiles, and once we get close there's the chain guns and computer-directed guns that can hit anything on the surface with pinpoint accuracy. Fortunately, we've spent the past twelve years concentrating on quantity rather than quality, so while we don't have any battleships or carriers or much of any kind of a blue water fleet, we've got six Sunburn-packing missile destroyers, over two hundred TACs, fifty-four U-boats, and about eighty punchies."

"Punchies?" asked Jackson.

"Small, fast hydroplane boats carrying a three-man crew, and one stubby little Nova missile with an effective range of five miles that can breach up to 18 inches of armor plate and hit with a concussion that

can also blow out the watertight compartments on most known vessels, including in my opinion an aircraft carrier if they hit her in the right place," explained Leach. "Kind of a nautical version of the old NVA shoot-and-scoot. Zip in, slam a missile into the enemy's side, zip out, back to base or the supply vessel and load another missile, repeat. They're light and very fast, and if only a few of them can *get close enough*, they can wreak havoc. Get a good square hit on the waterline of a destroyer or even a frigate with one of those Novas, and she's off to Davy Jones' locker in ten minutes. Trouble is getting close enough. Their hulls are mostly fiberglass, and they're unarmored. We deliberately sacrificed everything to speed and mobility and that one hellacious punch, hence the nickname. Plus their range is short. They're purely for coastal defense against just this kind of situation, but we really need for the enemy fleet to get in as close as we can lure them, to cut the time and distance necessary to deploy our vessels."

"Sounds like what we've done with the Songbirds and Starfighters," commented Basquine. "Don't even worry about standing up to the big boys on the block, just a lot of small craft that can move fast, hit hard, and then escape and evade. Can the TAC boats take down a carrier?"

"The Torpedo Assault Craft? Absolutely, once again with the proviso that they can get within effective range," Leach assured them. "That's the rub. Depending on how many jets and helicopter gunships the Luftwaffe can let us have, we will have some air cover against enemy copters, but we know you're going to be stretched thin, Billy. And there's just not too much we can do about missiles and fighter jet attacks. Mr. President, the best contingency plan we have been able to come up with for a scenario like this is to let the enemy fleet get as close as possible to our shore, then we swarm them like a pack of piranhas, all of us, so that we will overwhelm their radar and chain guns and missile defenses and at least some of us can get close enough to stop them. We have the firepower to sink those ships, if we can just bring it to them. Piranhas are small, but they have very sharp teeth, and enough of them can strip a man or a cow to the bone."

"One mass suicide mission and then that's our whole navy gone?" demanded Morehouse in horror.

"If that's what it takes to stop those carriers from launching bombing missions against our cities and our children, yes sir," said Leach. "There will be no Hamburgs or Dresdens here, Mr. President."

"General Basquine, will the Songbirds conceivably be any good against the carriers?" asked Morehouse.

"Sir, the Songbirds are tactical ground support aircraft, tank-killers and anti-transport hunters," said Basquine. "Their purpose is to make sure any enemy army invading the Northwest Republic does so on foot after the first 48 hours or so. They're prop jobs, since we could never afford any significant number of jets, based on the old German Stuka but twin-engined, plus some refinements of twenty-first century technology we've added. The Songbirds are fast as hell from the viewpoint of anybody on the ground, but slow as molasses to a computerized radar fire-control system. They're very maneuverable, which is good for dodging ground fire and evading enemy radar, but I have to recommend against sending them on long flights over the ocean where there is no place to hide and no place to evade radar and satellite surveillance. In fact, if Rotfungus can't take out the enemy satellite system, then we're going to be royally screwed. The Songbirds are nimble when flying low to the ground, like I said, but they're still tortoises compared to F-15s or F-22s, and they can be easily tracked from space. Like Admiral Leach's missile and torpedo boats, range and armor were sacrificed to speed and maneuverability and one big punch. Our Valkyrie helicopter gunships we *must* have to slow the enemy ground advance. The Republic will be fighting on three huge fronts, and there simply aren't enough of the Ladies for that, never mind a pitched battle at sea where they will be knocked out of the air like pigeons by computer-controlled chain guns."

"Okay, now we get down to the nitty-gritty," said President Morehouse. "Our three we-hope-to-hell-they're-secret weapons. First off, how does it look on Rotfungus, John?"

Morgan nodded. "Technical Warfare Division and Doc Doom himself assure me it can be done, that the virus will work and it will take out the entire American, Chinese, Japanese, European, and old Israeli spy satellite system all at once and about half the world's communications along with it, plus fucking up their ground control

servers like a dog's dinner. That will leave only the Russian orbital communications network intact, as well as our own few Lazarus Birds, so we cross our fingers and hope that Big Bear decides to stay mellow and not sell us out to whatever desperate and extravagant deal the Americans offer them for use of their eyes in the sky. But it's kind of like swallowing gasoline and then a lit match and blowing yourself up. Spectacular trick, but we can only do it once. Any attempt at a test run for Rotfungus beforehand will alert the Americans to the fact that we have the virus, and their cyber-geeks will have time to work up countermeasures."

"Not to mention the fact that if the Russians won't allow us access to their satellites, we will be almost as blind as the Americans, even with our handful of Lazarus Birds," said Morehouse with a sigh.

"Will Moscow dare to take our side openly?" asked Jackson.

"Big Bear has been of immense help over the past twelve years, for which they have been well compensated in Northwest paper and pulp, Northwest manufactured products, Northwest booze, Northwest marijuana and Northwest meat and grain which they have then sold on to other countries to maintain their position as a food-producer," said Morehouse. "To what degree all of those things earn us actual military assistance in a time of existential crisis has always been a very obscure point which we have been unable to get the Bear to clarify."

"Why not take down every damned satellite in the sky no matter who it belongs to, rather than let anyone use it against us?" asked Leach.

"That idea has been floated, Admiral. We may have to go that route if it looks as if our Russian friends are turning two-faced on us, but Russia was the first country to recognize us out of only four in the whole world to do so thus far, they have been of serious material help to us and comported themselves as friends, and I don't think we need to kick them in the balls without provocation. The Republic will need all the friends we can get. Now for the most important maybe of all. Carter, what's the story on Bluelight?"

"Same as Rotfungus," said Wingfield. "Joe Cord assures me it will work like a charm, but then a man who habitually refers to God as an

esteemed senior colleague doesn't strike me as having a too pragmatic point of view."

"Yes, I know, Doctor Cord's ego tends to cast Mount Rainier in the shade on sunny days," responded Morehouse dryly.

"Well, he did at least refer to the Almighty as a *senior* colleague," replied Wingfield sourly. "To give Cord due credit, there's no question that the Bluelight plasma weapon works, and it will bring down an aircraft. It works in the lab, and the prototypes worked in the few tests we've been able to do out in the Olympic on propeller-driven drones, on nice cloudy days when we hope to hell the satellites couldn't pick up on what we were doing. But short of bringing down an Air Northwest liner, we've never been able to test it out on jets at high altitude. The tracking and fire control unit works on the simulator. As risky as it is, we've fired a few test beams into the stratosphere, and the instrumentation shows they can reach 45,000 feet with only a ten percent power loss, which will destroy any plane or missile the Americans can throw at us like a mosquito in a bug zapper, if only we can *hit* the damned things. But you're talking about hitting an aircraft moving miles above the earth at anything up to twice the speed of sound, probably doing evasive maneuvers and possibly equipped with Stealth radar cloaking, with a plasma particle beam the diameter of a pencil. The key is the radar tracking and targeting unit. Does it work? The only way we'll know is when these bastards make their move. If the bombs fall on us, then it didn't work."

"Won't the American planes' onboard defenses lock onto the Bluelight's radar signal and hit the unit with a missile?" asked Jackson.

"That's why each battery consists of three projectors mounted on separate vehicles," explained Wingfield. "One to fire on the attacking aircraft, one to take out retaliatory missiles, and a third weapon as backup to either one as needed."

"How many batteries are ready for the field?" asked Morehouse.

"Two hundred or so," said Wingfield. "Just barely enough to cover our major urban areas and other potential targets. If we really do have until June, we can double that number by then with our crash program."

"Air Defense is starting the next training intake tomorrow, in fact, right here in Centralia," put in General Basquine. "All hand-picked men who will be confined to base until they're through and they have been deployed to army and Luftwaffe posts around the country, ready to roll when we get the word that the balloon has gone up."

"Keep me posted down to the last detail, Bill," said Morehouse. "Finally, the V-3s and the gas and bio warheads?"

"Olene, Lakeview, Cave Junction, and Siskiyou have about one hundred Type One V-3s each, and can fit phosgene, mustard gas, or sarin warheads on your order, Mr. President, as well as a small number of anthrax warheads," said Carter Wingfield. "Plus a simple HE warhead loaded with Semtex. You can cram a *lot* of Semtex into a thousand-kilogram warhead, if all you want to do is make a big hole in the ground in Sacramento. They need at least twenty-four hours' notice so they can get the warheads fitted and prepare the platforms for firing.

"For much the same reasons as apply to the naval and air forces, i.e. overwhelming them with low-tech in sheer numbers before they can get their high-tech toys focused, I recommend that once the invasion commences you order an immediate launch of all the rockets from those four platforms I just named. Type Ones are relatively simple, and by the standards of most modern weapons systems they're affordable to manufacture, given our military budget, at least. But they're slow and vulnerable. The Mex have no air defense system worthy of the name, but we have to assume that the Americans or the Chinese will give them some kind of cover, possibly from that naval fleet offshore, Patriots or some other kind of anti-aircraft system, or F-15 and F-22 jet fighters that could knock the V-3s down out of the sky like badminton birds. A mass launch would mean more chance that enough will get through to cause serious enemy casualties. Another reason is that those stations are right down on the border, to get as close to their targets as possible, and if the Aztecs move fast enough they will be overrun pretty quickly. The main base at Crater Lake has over five hundred rockets, including one hundred and twelve Type Twos which can hit Los Angeles."

"These people are coming to destroy our nation and kill and enslave our children," said Morehouse. "We have done nothing to them except demand the right to live among our own kind in our own land, the

same demand they themselves made of the United States twelve years ago. But they refuse to accord us the same right, they want to take what we have, and that has been going on for way too long already. So they're going to suffer. These weapons won't be decisive—hell, we can't even hit any substantial non-white target in the United States with them, their range is so short and they're so inaccurate—but they will make sure that if this Republic perishes from the earth, we will take a lot of mestizos with us, and if we survive we will make an example that will deter them from ever trying anything like this again. I know there are whites remaining in California as well, but if they're still there after twelve years and they have not come to our own racial Homeland then I assume they're nothing but liberal shits who love diversity so much they can damned well die in it. The minute the first Mexican soldier sets foot across that border, I'm giving the order.

"Each forward firing base will lay half their weapons on San Francisco, so we can eradicate as many bugger boys as possible in addition to mestizos, and the other half will drop on Sacramento so we can hopefully take out as much of their government as we can, including those fucking white traitor politicians in the Partida Criollo. All the Type Twos from Crater Lake head for Los Angeles, and never mind niggers in Compton or mestizos in East L.A. They're just cockroaches and their species is immortal; we'll never get rid of them all. Insofar as the V-3s can be aimed, which I understand isn't very accurately, I want them aimed at Hollywood, Malibu, Santa Monica, Brentwood, Beverly Hills, and Fairfax, so we can take out as many goddamned movie stars and Israelis and general Jews as we can. Carter, you and General Basquine come and see me tomorrow at eleven a.m. and we will work out the exact firing and targeting protocol. I also want to see if we can double our stock of both classes of V-3 Flying Bombs by D-Day and set up a couple of more forward firing platforms, maybe even with some Type Twos so we can drop a little death on Fresno and San Diego as well."

After the meeting broke up, Morehouse indicated to Frank Barrow that he should stay behind. "Frank, is there anything new on Operation Belladonna?" the president asked.

"I spoke to Charlie this morning before I came down," said Barrow. "The special handler his section recruited has completed his crash course at SoI and he's in Missoula now, conferring with the girl's family, the ones who remained in the Republic after Longview. They've agreed to cooperate, and assist in the first contact. The special op has been provided with everything he needs by way of documents, and he'll be leaving for La Cesspool Grande tomorrow, although it will take him a few days' travel time to get him to the place they've selected for him to pop onto the American grid in order to fit in with his cover identity. Once there the D.C. station chief will brief him. He will probably try to make initial contact in five or six days."

"I hope this works out," sighed Morehouse, shaking his head. "There is still so much we don't know, and most of it we can only get from somebody who is deep, deep inside the belly of the beast. Most important of all, *when* the hell are they going to hit us? We have to know in time to make sure we can get all the reservists mobilized, and get the Bluelight batteries in place, and a hundred other things we can't do until we have confirmation, so we can kick in Plan Seventeen. Forty-eight hours, Frank, that's all I ask, forty-eight hours' notice! God has given us so much in the past seventeen years, since that day they came for Gus Singer and his children and white men finally got up off their knees! Is it too much to ask for one more sign of His favor? Forty-eight hours?"

* * *

That night in Missoula, Lieutenant Robert Campbell, Junior sat down to the dinner table at his in-laws' home on Randles Street in East Missoula. It was a quiet and somber affair. The family knew that Bob was leaving the next day for an undisclosed location for an indeterminate period of time, and that he would be out of contact for the duration of that time. They knew it was something serious, but that was all. His mother-in-law Lorna just thought it was a work thing for the Guard, some kind of secret investigation. Robert was content to make that the official story, but he wasn't fooling anyone else.

Bob was lucky he had been able to come back for a brief visit at all; the original plan was that he was to be shipped right out after he got through at the School of Intelligence on Whidbey Island. At the last minute, it had been decided to clue Clancy and Kevin Myers into what was going on, so that they could give Bob personal messages he could deliver to Georgia when they met, adding to his credibility and persuasive power. Bob was glad he could bring the Myers men in on it, since he not only felt the loss of his childhood friend Peanut almost as keenly as they did, but he owed the professor a big favor. It was at the university that he had met his future wife, courtesy of Clancy Myers.

Eight years before, Bob had been a 19-year-old national serviceman just out of the School of Infantry at Fort Matthews, sporting full corporal's stripes indicating he had maxed out the course. He was home on a week's leave before reporting to his permanent unit at the Oroville border crossing into Canada, where he would spend the next sixteen months assisting fleeing migrants trying to Come Home, hunting down infiltrators coming in to spy and to plant land mines, and getting gloriously drunk in the NCO's mess. Like most young men in a uniform, Robert wanted to show it off, and so he had swaggered over to the university to see his brother-in-law, the Chancellor Jason Stockdale, and his old friend Dr. Clancy Myers. Kevin Myers, being almost a year younger, was just starting his own military training at Fort Lewis himself, and so was absent that day.

Jason and Jason's wife, Bob's sister Jennifer, had treated him to lunch in the faculty lounge and introduced him around to some new faces he didn't know, and then he had dropped around to Clancy Myers' office to say hello. Clancy was now head of the combined Culture and Literature Department, which included the study of all the great writers and philosophers and poets of the Western canon and heritage. He supervised a staff of over sixty academics and their teaching assistants, taught two courses himself, and was always ready to sub in the classroom any time another professor was ill or otherwise unavailable. Immersing himself in his work had been his way of dealing with his daughter's loss.

Bob was seated in Clancy's office going over the usual stock in trade tales of basic training and military derring-do with the older man when

the door opened, and in walked a young goddess, short and voluptuous, with a single blonde braid down her back, wearing a long, flowing blue velvet dress. She was bearing a stack of file folders like they were garlands to be laid reverently on a smoking altar in a forest glade, instead of plopped into a middle-aged egghead's in-basket. Robert had leaped to his feet before the girl even looked at him, and when she turned her ringed eyes of crystalline blue on him, Robert only barely managed to shut his gaping mouth in time. Then he stared desperately at Clancy.

It had only been four years since the Revolution, but already mores in the Republic were changing due to a combination of subtle and not-so-subtle pressure and indoctrination from the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, and also because of a nearly instinctive desire on the part of the people to get back to the older and better ways, in every aspect of life. In the old American days, Robert would have practically chased the girl down the corridor gabbling every suggestive and flirtatious pick-up line in his repertoire, although actual touching would not have been allowed at that point due to considerations of political correctness. Depending on how she felt inclined toward her new admirer, she would either have responded with more of the same, implying that a squelch session in the near future was a distinct possibility, or else if not, she would have blown him off in the language of a nigger bitch. Throw in some crack and negroid hip-hop and raunchy tattoos, and that was the way such things were done in Amurrica.

But already social mores in the Northwest Republic were changing, going backward with amazing speed, as a whole people desperately tried to climb back on board the ship from which they had been hurled by Jews generations before. It was now understood by young men and women of their age that they were civilized white people, and not negroid animals in heat. Certain ancient courtship rituals were now once again required, such as an actual *introduction*, before the dance could begin. Simply walking up to a girl on the street or in the halls of a university and trying to force an acquaintance now came under the quaint, archaic description of an unwelcome advance, or even the century-old Guys & Dolls term of a "mash." It invited a slap from the young lady or a physical assault from any nearby male relative. It also marked the young man who attempted it as a boorish whigger,

and probably ruined his chances with the girl for good. Without an introduction, Robert was screwed at the starting gate.

Robert stood to attention, cleared his throat, and barely restrained himself from yelling at Clancy to be introduced. The girl was lingering and she didn't seem averse, but they could hardly stand there like statues for minute after minute. Clancy stared back at Robert owlishly, puzzled as to what he wanted, and then he glanced at the girl and it hit him. "Oh, of course, where are my manners? Millie, this is Corporal Robert Campbell of the Defense Force, Fourth Infantry Brigade up at Oroville, or he will be. Robert, this is Millie, one of my part-time admin assistants from the high school. She graduates in June and she'll be doing her Labor Service here at UM along with night school for a teaching degree, and so she's getting a head start on things now, after school."

"I'm pleased to meet you, Miss Millicent," said Robert, ridiculously trying to sound like Rhett Butler.

"It's Milada," said the girl in a firm, pleasing contralto voice. "Milada Horakova. It's Czech. My family is from Chicago, and before that from Bohemia. We Came Home in the year after Longview." The girl extended her hand, which Robert took. Hand kissing wasn't on the Ministry of Culture's cards yet, so he merely gave it a quick firm clasp.

Clancy took in the situation at a glance. "Millie, I think you're done for the afternoon." She wasn't, but all three of them got it. "You can clock out now."

"I need to get going myself, Doctor Myers," said Bob. "Have you got a car, Miss Horakova?" Many people in the Republic didn't any more; not only was the fuel situation still a little dodgy, but there was no longer any need for them in any city or town because there was now safe, clean, efficient and nigger-free public transport. "If not, I would be happy to give you a ride home."

"Thank you, Corporal Campbell," she said demurely. "Let me clock out and get my coat. I'll be back in a minute."

After she had left, Clancy said, "So far as I know, she's unattached, but she brought her family to our Independence Day bash last October, and I should warn you that she had a father and a brother both the size

of tanks on either side of her. I get the impression that trifling with that young lady's affections is rather high on life's Not Recommended list. I seem to recall hearing somewhere that they had a rough time with their Homecoming. Had to run the border with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Other than that caveat, lay on, McDuff, and damn'd be he who first cries hold, enough." Before the week was out Bob had secured Millie's permission to write to her from Oroville, since good old-fashioned letters were once again coming into widespread use in the absence of a nationwide internet e-mail system which would be vulnerable to monitoring and hacking by the Republic's multifarious enemies. After several months of *billets-doux*, on his next leave Robert was formally brought before the family for inspection. Eli and Ed liked the cut of his jib, and the rest was history.

Tonight at dinner, Eli and Ed Horakova were grim and Millie was restrained. Even the children had caught wind of something going on in the outer world of the adults. Bobby Three, Bob and Millie's five-year-old son, stared at his father and his mother with big eyes rather than his more normal practice of stuffing too much food in his mouth and pelting his three-year-old sister with peas when he thought no one was looking. Ida herself was just out of the high chair, seated on a plastic box topped with a cushion so she could reach the table. She wasn't eating much, just kneading mashed potatoes with her fingers. Bob broke the silence by engaging their Horakova cousins, Ed and Janette's brood, with questions and comments about school and eight-year-old Stan's first marksmanship competition with air rifles. "You'll be shooting for the Pioneers in the nationals, Stash," Bob told him with a smile.

"I can't join the Pioneers until I'm ten," said Stanislas.

After dinner, Lorna and Janette took the children next door to Ed's house to watch Kappy the Kike cartoons on disc. "You went to see Kevin and Clancy Myers this afternoon," said Millie in the kitchen, as she cleared away the dishes.

"How did you know?" asked Bob.

"I was at the University for lunch with Tammy Myers. We thought you guys would come down to the cafeteria, but you didn't."

"No, Kevin and Clancy and I had some things to take care of," said Bob. "I can't talk about it, and neither can they, so please, don't press any

of them, Millie. No one can talk about this, for real. One day I'll tell you what it's all about." *If I make it*, he almost added, but caught himself in time. "But for now it just has to be like this. I'm sorry."

"You're not going to Seattle on a secret investigation for the police, are you?" she asked, drying a dish.

"No," he said. He owed her at least some smidgeon of the truth.

"I didn't think so. This is something else, something that happened when you were in Olympia for two weeks."

"Again, I can only tell you I'm sorry, Mil. It is what it is."

"Yes, I know," said Millie with a nod. "I've known you for eight years now, and I know you don't lie and you don't cheat. You met somebody in Olympia?"

"Yes," he said. "There's a reason why I have to be involved."

"I can think of only one reason that would involve both you and the Myers. You're going Out There to try and find that girl? The one who was stolen, the Lost Baby. Georgia. The one you and Kevin used to call Peanut."

"How do you figure that?" asked Bob.

"You're a Guardsman, you're not in BOSS or any of the spook agencies, and yet somebody like that tapped you for whatever this is. There must be something special about you. Then you spend several hours huddled with the surviving relatives of a Lost Baby, so she must have something to do with it all. She hasn't come back, or I assume she'd be here in Missoula and we'd be having her over to dinner to tell us about all her adventures in the mouth of hell. So she's still outside the Republic. My guess is that for some reason that has suddenly become important, you're going Out There to collect her and bring her back."

"Bring our little girl home, Bobby," Clancy Myers had asked him that afternoon, with tears in his eyes. "Please, bring our little girl home!"

"Dad, she's not our little girl any more. Wherever she is, she's a grown woman now," Kevin told his father. "God knows what she's like after spending the last twelve years growing up with Amber and her fruitcake grandmother scrubbing her brain a nice bright pink. She may not *want* to Come Home, Dad, and we need to be ready for that."

"No, Kevin, you don't get it," Clancy had said, shaking his head. "You will if Tammy's next baby is a daughter, though. Sons grow up and become men, but daughters are always your little girl, no matter what happens."

"Damn, you should get your own detective shield," said Robert now to his wife, shaking his head in admiration. "Millie, straight up, keep all this to yourself. Loose lips here can get people killed. No joke."

"Including you?" asked Millie.

"I'm not going to get killed, honey. This is just something that has to be done, and I'm the one who has to do it. I'll tell you when time and place shall serve, as Shakespeare said."

Eli and Ed were harder to put off. "Good luck, son, whatever it is," his father-in-law told him, shaking his hand. "Any idea when you'll be back?"

"Some months at least," he said. "Millie will be getting a call every couple of weeks from someone in Olympia just to tell her I'm okay, and it won't be a lie. They won't tell her anything else, but they won't lie to her, so if they say I'm all right, she can believe it. If anything happens to me, she'll be notified."

"Millie and the kids will stay here with us while you're gone."

"Thanks, Eli," said Bob.

"How likely is it that you're not coming back at all?" the old man asked him bluntly.

"I just swore to Millie, I plan on coming back," said Robert. "I mean to. But this is a delicate job, and anything could happen."

"Anything to do with this latest invasion scare?" asked Ed, now as tall and as powerful and dour as his father.

"What invasion scare?" said Robert. "I haven't heard anything."

"Bullshit," said Ed.

"If not, you're the only one who hasn't," said Eli. "We do have a media in this country, and you're right, they don't tell us much on some things, but what they do tell us is straight up. Reservists being called up for extra training, including Ed here, Tommy's Pioneer troop at the high school getting sudden notice of a big nationwide exercise in June. All kinds of programs on TV about preparedness, stocking up on food

and fuel and water. We can put two and two together. So they're finally coming for us from Out There?"

"There's always that chance," replied Bob carefully.

"Yeah, sure. Okay, you can't say. I get it." Eli looked him in the eye. "All I can do is give you my word, Bob, that if Amurrica comes for those kids, they'll have to go through me first."

"And me," said Ed.

Bob knew the story of the family's flight from Cicero, and he knew these strong and angry white men meant what they said. "Thank you both. That's good for me to know."

Later on that night, Robert Campbell stopped by his sister's house, the Chancellor's official residence on campus. Jenny was getting her own children to bed, and then she came down and joined her brother and her husband in the living room. The once pretty girl had become a mature and beautiful matron of strength and dignity, and Jason was now entering an early middle age, which one understood would be the prime of his life. "You know I always envied the hell out of you two," Bobby confessed to them, although he'd said it before. "The lives you led with the NVA. I was just a kid at the time, and I know that like most kids I was romanticizing danger and violence and terror into something it isn't. I've picked up that much in the cops. But now this thing has come up. I can't tell you any of the details, and I can't tell you why I of all people drew the short straw and got picked for this, but I guess you can figure out that I'm not going undercover to bust car thieves or burglary gangs in Seattle. I'm going Out There, and it's going to be pretty hairy."

"The Circus?" asked Jason.

"Yeah. I want to ask you two: how do you do it? How do you move and function and fight and survive in it all? I imagine it must be like a diver at the bottom of the sea in one of those old-fashioned suits with the brass helmet and the air hose, having to watch every step and make sure you don't get tangled or sucked into anything, but I don't really know what that means. How do you do it? How do you get the job done and come back alive? I have a lot to come back to."

"I know," said Jason sympathetically.

"Any tips?" he asked.

"Rule number one," said Jason. "Stay focused, as psycho-babblish as that sounds. Always be aware of your surroundings. Know where you are, know where everything is, know who is around you and where. When you go into a room, you register every single person in it, every exit, every object. Watch people. Every move they make, every word they say, every gesture, anything that marks them as a friend or a foe, or in most cases neither, just part of the shifting scenery. But you have to be able to tell the difference. You start drifting or daydreaming about Millie and the kids and you'll end up lying on a gurney dressed in orange with a needle sticking in your arm, and they will never see you again."

"Never forget who you're supposed to be," said Jenny. "*Be* that person. If you're supposed to be Cherry Cahoon the trashed-out crack whore, you're Cherry the trashed-out junkie. If you're supposed to be Molly Hansen the soccer jock chick, you're Molly Hansen down to your socks and your cleats. If you're supposed to be Louise Benteen the junior U.S. Attorney, you swing that briefcase right through the security check like you're Louise and no one else." Bob got the impression she wasn't just pulling names out of the air. "If you just put on an act, if you're just playing a role, you'll forget your lines or slip up on a name or something that Cherry or Molly or Louise should know, and some gun thug will pick up on it."

"Keep your weapons clean as a whistle with just enough oil so they will function," said Jason. "When you need it, you're going to need it in a split second, and a stoppage means death. Always carry a backup gun, something small like a .380 or a .22 that will fit in an ankle holster or a pocket or even up your sleeve. Don't carry a knife unless you know what you're doing, and you can use it without a second's hesitation."

"Any time you get a chance to go to the bathroom, take it, whether you need to or not," Jenny told him. "Same thing with sleep. A revolutionary lives on cat naps. No drugs to stay awake and don't touch a drop of booze while you're working, which is always. Any of this sound helpful at all?"

"I guess," said Bob. "I got all that in—well, I was taught. But mostly I just want to know how you did it, year after year, without going nuts?"

The two of them were quiet for a bit. "Bob," Jason finally said, "I'm not sure how to put this, but—during those years, Jenny and I were both scared shitless most of the time. We were scared of death, we were scared of prison and the waterboard and the electrode and the Dershowitz needles, and above all we were terrified that one of us would die and the other would have to live on, that this house and this life and those kids upstairs would never be. But the one thing we were never afraid of, not ever, was that we would lose. The NVA and the revolution were part of history and we were part of the NVA and the revolution. It was who we were, and we were that because we knew, we *knew*, that the survival of our race was the will of God, and that so long as we did His will as best we could, we would be sustained, and that someday it would be over, and the world would be right again. When you know that in your soul, as we did, then once you get Out There, you'll know what to do."

IX

Out There

(12 years and six months after Longview)

Any American who is prepared to run for president should automatically be disqualified from ever doing so.
—Gore Vidal

Lieutenant Robert Campbell sat on a wooden chair in a cramped office overlooking a loading dock and the interior of a warehouse, just off Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. Cardboard cartons of cigarettes and cheap cigars were piled in the corners. He was listening to his new boss scream threats and obscenities into the phone.

Vinnie Skins sat behind a huge mahogany desk and scowled into the videocam on the handset. He was a square blockhouse of a man and could look menacing even over the phone. His brown hair was combed back over his head into a ducktail with fragrant pomade, and his blue-scraped face and jaw reeked of aftershave. Skins wore a $27,000 suit (at present inflated American costs) underneath which was a pink silk shirt and blue tie, Gucci shoes in the $8000-a-pair region, and a huge diamond pinky ring. He finally calmed down a bit and went on in a more reasonable voice. "Tony, look, you know I always liked you. You're a nice guy, you got a pretty wife, hey, I *do* like you. I like having all tings pleasant about me, and I hate it when guys I like take advantage of my fucking good nature like youse is doing now. But because I like you, I'll make you a deal. You get me four hundred pounds of pork chops, a whole side of beef, an' twenny racks of lamb by Friday, and you *don't* send it in some piece of crap truck wit' de refrigeration busted so it arrives here thawed out, and I *won't* peel de skin off your face like

a fucking onion. Don't dat show how much I like you? Can't say fairer dan dat, now, can I? Now go fuck yourself." He folded up the phone.

"Does Richie have to swear like that?" asked Campbell.

"Think of it as a foreign language you have to learn in order to communicate with the natives," said Major Vincent Cardinale of the War Prevention Bureau. "Listen to the niggers on the street and on the tube, and imitate them. Blacks have been setting the cultural and linguistic tone on the streets in this country for a long time. Until you pick up the real rap, just throw a couple of shits and fucks into every sentence, and you'll pass. The Office tells me your Spanish is fluent?"

Bob had already learned that no reference was ever made on station to the WPB or even to the Circus, as part of the operatives' ingrained wariness against the electronic eavesdropping from a dozen public and private agencies that was everywhere in America. Out Here it was always just the Office. "Yes sir, although it's classroom variety. We read Don Quixote in school in the original Spanish, but I can barely understand this gabble I've been hearing from all the beaners around me since I crossed over."

"Cervantes wrote in classical Castilian, the Spanish version of Shakespeare," Cardinale told him. "These mestizos around here speak pig-ignorant peasant dialects from a hundred different localities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Some of them don't even speak Spanish; they're from so far out in the jungle, only obscure little Paleolithic Indian dialects. You're Chicago Irish from Bridgeport, remember, so you won't be expected to know more than a couple of hundred words of pidgin Spanish, mostly swear words. When you're dealing with beaners, you can just throw in a few essays and vatos along with your shits and fucks."

There was a knock on the door. "Getcha ass in here!" Cardinale yelled. The door opened and a man and a woman came in. The man was tall and about forty years old, with long blond hair and a drooping moustache both tinged with a little gray, and a gold earring in his ear. He was wearing a blue overall with pleated shoulders, a cloth belt with a silver buckle displaying a dollar sign, and expensive shoes with pointed steel toes, the height of fashion for an edgy underworld player type in America's current quasi-negroid, media-fueled subculture. The

woman looked to be in her mid-twenties, with a hard face that might have been pretty if she'd tried, and long auburn hair tied behind her head. She wore cut-off jeans and sandals and a sleeveless gray sweatshirt. She had several tattoos on her arms and legs, including a dove on one shoulder and an intricate depiction on her shin of Jesus Christ giving the world the finger. She carried a small, holstered automatic on her belt and the man's overall bulged from the weapon he carried beneath it in a shoulder holster rig.

Bob himself was wearing simple jeans, a T-shirt, and heavy work boots, as well as several prominent new tattoos of his own, including an Irish shamrock on one bicep, a dagger piercing a heart over the name "Lila" on his left forearm, as well as minor bits and pieces of prison ink, but he had no weapon. The WPB decided for him that the tats were necessary to his cover, and the technician-cum-artist who decorated his body assured him that that upon his return, they would come out of his skin after a series of treatments with a special solution. "This is Duke, and this is Betsy," said Cardinale as they sat down on the office sofa and nodded to him. "Guys, this is Richie from Chicago, our new associate from the home office. He's here to take point on Belladonna."

"I know I had to come in clean because of the airline security, but am I supposed to be strapped?" Bob/Richie asked, nodding at the gun riding on the girl's slim, hard waistline.

"Nothing heavy, unless needed. I'll give you a .380 junk gun to carry on the street," said Cardinale. "Since your cover is that you're a legger, you'll need a piece for your deliveries, both for show and also in case some jonesing hufflepuff or some other crew tries to jack your freight."

"Huh?" asked Bob.

"In case some cigarette fiend who doesn't have the two hundred bucks to light up tries to rob you, or else some other hoods try for both your product and your roll," translated the girl.

Cardinale went on. "You'll be servicing our *crème de la crème* route over in the Green Zone, in order to bring you into contact with the subject, so you shouldn't run into that problem, but better safe than sorry. Guns are illegal, of course, have been since the Schumer Act all those years ago, but everyone in American cities ignores the law, and

the cops have pretty much stopped bothering to enforce it unless they want an excuse to hold you for something else, like they more or less stopped busting people for a couple of joints back when marijuana was still illegal. Usually these days, they just issue a citation and confiscate the piece. Don't worry too much about the D.C. cops finding it on you during a stop-and-frisk. They would be surprised if one of Vinnie Skins' crew *wasn't* strapped. Most likely, they'll just write you a ticket, confiscate the gun, and then sell it back to me. Unless somebody's looking for a bigger taste, and then they'll throw you in the tank and make me come down and spread some lettuce around, but that shouldn't happen. I have formal arrangements with both D.C. Metro and the Park Police, and I pay a pretty penny for our guys to do business with no hassles in the Green Zone, so they should leave you alone once they come to know you. It won't be nearly as rough as if you were dealing in Virginia, and we stay out of nigger turf in Maryland altogether, but we do occasionally have some trouble inside the Green Zone with jumpers."

"Jumpers?" asked Bob/Richie.

"What Betsy said," explained Duke. "Hijackers. Guys from other crews who jump you and try to rip off your butts, or your steaks, or sausage, or whatever you're holding."

Cardinale picked it up. "Like any expanding business in a dynamic market, we've got ongoing problems with a couple of other outfits, mostly the Lon Tran Vietnamese mob from Falls Church, but they most likely won't bother you in the District. They can't get the proper FLECs for the Green Zone and so they have to sneak in, and usually they don't go to the effort just to hassle our runners. Getting caught in the ESMA without a Class A FLEC is a mandatory six months in a penal factory, and Lon's boys won't risk a hiccup like that unless it's something important, which jacking a single legger isn't."

"Oh, by the way, Rich, here's your own new alpha FLEC." Duke took out a plastic ID card and handed it to Bob. "Hang on to your old one for your trip Home, but use this one while you're here. You'll need it for the Green Zone. I stopped by Birdie's on the way up here and I paid for it."

"How much?" asked Cardinale, taking out a roll of bills.

"Thirty grand," said Duke. "He says he has to raise his prices since he had to shell out big for this year's recognition codes twice, because DHS changed them last month."

"Jesus Christ! I know Birdie does the best work in town, but dat's fuckin' highway robbery," said Cardinale, lapsing into Vinniespeak. He peeled some $5000 bills off the roll, bearing Jimmy Carter's picture, and handed the money to Duke, who added it into his own roll of bills.

"What can I tell you?" said Duke with a shrug. "Everything costs at least twice as much as it did this time last year, and that includes ID. Oh, by the way, Rich, when you're making your pickups and deliveries, be sure you carry your cash in a roll, like this. Only amateurs carry a wallet, and you're supposed to be a long-time player. Anyway, with the inflation, most people have to carry more money than they can stuff into a wallet anyway."

"Roll, got it," said Bob. He looked at the laminated plastic Federal Law Enforcement Confirmed Identity Document, to give it the full nomenclature. FLEC was now the American national ID system, but it was more than that. Your FLEC was your driver's license, your bank and credit card, and in most cities, it was required by law to be the key to your home or apartment. Actual locks were forbidden, in case the police or FBI needed to use their own master cards to get in. The card's memory chip contained all of a person's medical records and employment history, as well as their military and criminal record if any, whether or not they were one of the few Americans now favored with a legal gun permit and for what weapons? And of course it was also one's legally mandated Global Positioning beacon, so that the authorities could physically locate an individual any time of the day or night. To be challenged by police and not be able to produce a FLEC was a class C federal felony, and to be found in possession of a false one like this meant serious time in prison or a privately run penal factory.

Not that any of it really worked. Probably no law in United States history, with the possible exception of Prohibition, was more completely disregarded and evaded by its remaining citizens than the Amended Real ID Act. There were simply too many things that Americans wanted to hide, from a bogus resumé to unreported income to an adulterous affair, for them to carry it all around with them in their

wallet or purse. Evading the FLEC card and its microchip had become a kind of national sport, and so many people were doing it that despite occasional draconian examples, it was simply impossible to impose credible punishment on all violations. Anyone who surfed the internet could find dozens of ways to disable one's FLEC card, hack into the chip and alter the data on it, or re-program it to show one location to the GPS satellite while the card and its owner were actually somewhere else. And if they weren't sufficiently tech-savvy to do it themselves, there were hackers and forgers who specialized in monkeying around with FLECs. Some even advertised in the Yellow Pages.

The bogus card Bob held in his hand showed his name as Richard Carroll, and his birthplace as Chicago, Illinois. His current address, according to the card, was an apartment in Arlington which was in fact occupied by a Malaysian couple and their extended family. Robert's WPB trainers back on Whidbey Island had discussed his new identity with him, and it was decided to make him Richie Carroll from Chicago because Bob had picked up enough stories, bits and pieces of knowledge, and local color about That Toddling Town from his wife and his in-laws to fake it. His photo as Richie twinkled in special pixels for the various electronic scanners and readers the card would be passed through. "This has my whole rap sheet on it?" he asked curiously. "Or Richie's rap sheet, I should say?"

"Yeah," said Cardinale. "Eight or ten beefs, petty to middling, couple of B&Es and disorderlies and car thefts back in Chicago in the days of your uproarious youth, the rest of them possession charges. One bust for ten cartons of Rothmans filters, mysteriously dropped down to four to get it below distribution weight, which will build your cred for being mobbed up. One ADW just for panache, when you shot a rival legger who was trying to jack a backpack full of Macanudos off you."

"Did I kill him?" asked Richie.

"No, just wounded him," said Cardinale. "We don't want to make you too violent, or else the FBI or the Metro OCB might think I've brought you in for muscle, and we want to keep Vinnie Skins' crew as low profile and smooth as we can, considering our high-class clientele. Young Richard is also showing one bust for using a fake rabbinical ID claiming you were a Jew in order to buy legal kosher brisket. Then

comes your *pièce de resistance*. You did two years in the federal pen at Allenwood for getting pulled over on the New Jersey turnpike driving a whole truckload of chilled kosher chickens with a false end-user certificate to a licensed Jewish delicatessen in New York, which it's assumed you meant to sell under the counter to certain mob-controlled chew-easies in New York. You refused to rat out your boss, presumably me, Vinnie Skins, hence my offer of employment here in the nation's capitol once you got out. All of this will check out if the cops pull you over and run your card. The cyber-whizz kids back at the Office have hacked into all the necessary servers at DOJ and NCIC and the FBI, and you'll show as up as Richie Carroll."

"You will," said Duke. "I had Birdie run you himself on his own private rig before I paid for the card, just to make sure. It's good."

"So all of you have these criminal records on your ID cards?" asked Bob. "I know one doesn't ask real names and real past details, but what's on you guys' rap sheets? I mean, we're supposed to be thick as thieves, literally. I could need it for my cover. Who exactly are you supposed to be?"

"Fair enough," said Cardinale. "In point of fact I really am Italian, but there the resemblance between me and Vinnie Skins pretty much ends. No one knows my real name or where I'm really from, except I'll tell you I was born and raised in the Homeland."

"NVA, judging from your age?" asked Bob daringly.

"Yes," said Cardinale briefly. "According to my FLEC card, I have a criminal record dating all the way back to the age of fourteen in New Jersey, which is ironic, since New Jersey is one of the few places on the continent I've never actually been. Well, a stopover in Newark airport, once. Vinnie Skins is a low-level wiseguy who may or may not be a made member of the Atlantic City Cosa Nostra family, no one's quite clear on that. Six years ago, when they passed the Healthy America Act, I spotted a cushy market peddling cancer sticks and stogies down here in our indivisible nation's capitol, and here I have been ever since. I am known to be very well connected and the purveyor of fine smokables and comestibles to some very distinguished clients indeed in Congress, the Pentagon, the judicial branch, and the bureaucracy."

"Not the White House?" asked Bob.

"Sixteen hundred Pennsylvania is a special case," said Cardinale. "We can get e-intercepts sometimes, but it's a very hard nut to crack as far as getting anybody into the West Wing goes. I'll get into it with you later on."

"How did you get the name Vinnie Skins?" asked Robert.

"Supposedly I was into hijacking furs in my younger days."

"I'm a bad boy altogether," said Duke. "All kinds of crimes of violence, shootings and stabbings and one arson-for-hire thrown in for good measure. I'm supposed to be the muscle in the outfit. Well, I am." Bob was going to ask Duke if he were ex-NVA as well, but decided not to push it. He was sure he knew the answer in any case.

"Three guesses what I'm supposed to be," said Betsy with an ironic smile. "Plus a meat mule and leaf lady, of course. Duke and I are Vinnie's street captains for the Green Zone, and we'll be the ones over there giving you a hand on a day to day basis."

"You don't mind people thinking, uh, *that* about you?" asked Bob. "Even if it isn't true?"

Betsy laughed sardonically. "Hot damn, they really are raising a whole generation of prudes back in the Homeland!" she said to Vinnie and Duke.

"Yes, I guess we are at that," admitted Bob. "When was the last time you were back?"

"Long time," the girl said casually. "I've got registered sex trade worker on my FLEC, and it accounts for my being almost anywhere, anytime, anywhere in the Green Zone. I've been stopped in the corridors of Congress at two in the morning and talked my way out of it by flashing my card and my baby blues, or in my case my baby greens."

"Don't they ask who you're there, uh, seeing?" asked Bob curiously.

"Nope," replied Betsy. "They're not allowed to ask, under the law. I can't even be made to tell in court. Courtesan-client privilege."

"*What?*" said Bob. All three of them laughed.

"No, really, she's not shitting you," said Cardinale. "A few years ago an elderly federal judge here in D.C. died in a working girl's apartment of a coronary. She and her pimp tried the old Dress-The-Corpse-And-Prop-Him-Up-Behind-The-Wheel-Of-His-Cadillac

trick, but they forgot about the security cameras everywhere, they got caught on digital, and there was an unholy stink. All kinds of sound and fury about the girl's client list on her Blackberry and who got to see it, was it public record, could the judge in the case seal the trial records, journalists offering millions of dollars of bribes all over the place for the list or interviews with the hooker, the whole insane zoo that breaks out whenever anybody in this jaded and corrupt society scents sex and scandal. The power structure and the media are always on the lookout for anything to distract the American people from the sludge pump of their daily lives." Cardinale shook his head in disgust, then went on. "Anyway, without keeping you here until midnight, the nine Supremes closed ranks with their errant brother in justice, and after a long dramatic roll of sound and fury, they created something called courtesan-client confidentiality, so prostitutes of both genders—excuse me, 'sexual services specialists'—cannot now be legally compelled to rat out their clients. It was a popular ruling in D.C., let me tell you. Believe it or not, all this grunge is in fact somewhat relevant to your mission, Rich, because courtesan-client privilege is what Hunter Wallace uses to cover his own activities along that line and prevent any scrutiny of what he actually does to his ladies in the sack, as well as a private personal services contract with a bitch of a confidentiality clause. Wallace always pays his women for their personal services, which is the accepted legal euphemism, and that keeps his ass covered in every sense of the term."

Bob was about to ask Betsy just how far she went using her peculiar cover in order to get the job done, then realized it was none of his business. Instead, he asked, "You said you were having trouble with other meat and tobacco dealers?"

"Yeah, those gooks in Falls Church," said Duke. "About six months ago, they jacked a truckload of spare ribs from us in McLean and killed the driver, but we lit up one of their warehouses, killed the two guards on duty and cleaned them out of a thousand pounds of beef and pork, as well as a hundred cases of Gauloises and knockoff Chinese Camels and Marlboros. The Greater Capitol Area Crime Commission stepped in and negotiated a truce, at their usual exorbitant fee, but it's held for the time being. We hit back hard enough to maintain our own street

cred and send the message we won't be fucked with, but in view of our actual purpose here, we had to cool it down."

"We ended up having to pay the gooks a couple of million in compensation, and I pitched a real bitch about it, ranted and raved and cursed like a good wiseguy should, but we need this front and we don't want a real gang war developing," explained Cardinale. "Bad for business. Both our businesses."

Campbell looked down through the windows at the men unloading cases of bootleg cigarettes from trucks, including several obvious mestizos. "How many of those guys are with the Office?" he asked.

"None of them," said Cardinale. "Those are all real criminals. You run into any of them here or on the street, you say hello and act cool, but don't get chummy or hang with any of them. Vinnie Skins runs a protected operation, but that doesn't mean we're not under intermittent surveillance by assorted law enforcement teams with nothing better to do. This station has a number of Office operatives, but you will only know a few of them as your mission dictates. As few as possible. If you get lifted you can't betray what you don't know. I wouldn't be showing you this place if it wasn't part of your cover and you wouldn't be expected to know about it, as do the cops and feds, of course. You will mostly deal with me directly, but if I'm not available, you deal with Duke or Betsy, who have been briefed on the reason for your presence here. They're your backup in anything that might get wet, or where you just need a hand with something. You will also meet a man we call the Zombie Master. He's a proper psychiatrist and psychologist, and he needs to know all about the subject and your interaction with her, to make sure she's functioning and she isn't going off the rails under pressure."

"That's assuming we can activate her and get her placed," said Bob.

"That's why you're here," said Cardinale with a wintry smile.

"I'm still not sure I get this whole idea of posing as tobacco and meat smugglers," said Robert. "I mean, shouldn't you be trying to *avoid* undue attention from the police?"

"We need some excuse to move around the streets unfettered and go into neighborhoods where we couldn't otherwise be," said Duke.

"By its very nature, our real work is covert and it involves suspicious behavior on our part, and that's hard to conceal in the Green Zone, with spy cameras monitoring every square meter of sidewalk. What better disguise than as buttleggers and beefleggers? What better reason to appear on camera seeming furtive and trying to dodge the surveillance than the fact that we really *are* engaging in illegal activity, except the DHS in their all-seeing wisdom thinks they know us, that they know what illegal activity we're engaging in, and it's one which is more or less socially acceptable. In the 1920s during Prohibition, it was bootleggers. For seventy years after that it was drug dealers, until they legalized most drugs."

"Now it's pork chops and ciggies," said Betsy. "These shitheads always have to be outlawing something, so they can have big police agencies with big budgets to chase after it and lock a lot of people up in their prisons to be farmed out to the corporations as cheap slave labor. When Mexicans won't do, use convicts. Been that way in America for over a century now."

"When they see us on their cameras here, there, and everywhere, in some government office building or at some soirée in Georgetown, the ZOG snoops pigeonhole us as leggers slipping some high functionary a few T-Bones or Cohibas, and they move on," said Duke. "Same with Betsy here. They track her on the cameras all the time, but they figure she's just working, and if she makes house calls in a government office building or shows up at certain parties, she's just being enterprising. This is Washington D.C., one of the few remaining places in the Western world where power and money are concentrated in serious amounts. Powerful and wealthy people have needs, and someone's going to supply them, legal or not."

Cardinale chuckled. "It's a basic rule of conspiracy: when you're suspected of something, try and make the evidence point to a lesser offense. Human nature being what it is, you have more chance of being believed."

"The problem is that *everything* in the Green Zone attracts attention," said Duke. "It's designed that way, not even so much to stop wicked spies and terrorists like us, but just to keep the damned niggers from Maryland out and keep them from fucking everything up and making

the place unlivable, as niggers always do. The Green Zone and some of the D.C. suburbs are small, very wealthy, very white and Jewish enclaves in a black and brown sea, but these are the people who keep what's left of the United States government functioning, the civil servants and policy wonks and legislators and the whole range of business, technical and service personnel needed to sustain them. The team of surgeons who keep the patient alive, so to speak. The establishment needs them. If this privileged and empowered élite is to keep on doing its job, it requires twenty-four-seven security monitoring to keep the dedicated servants of the Land of the Free and Home of the Brave from getting butchered and served up in a cannibal feast, and I mean that literally. That shit was going on last year up in Silver Spring."

"Welcome to Hunter Wallace's magical Surveillance State," said Cardinale. "The District of Columbia, the Green Zone as everybody calls it, is in fact officially known as the ESMA, the Enhanced Security Monitoring Area. Back around the turn of the century, Congress and all the senior bureaucrats got tired of the long commute, sometimes from as far away as Baltimore and Fredericksburg. They wanted to live within a short walk or ride to where they worked and their gyms and favorite watering holes and their mistresses' apartments. Trouble was, other than a few areas like Georgetown and DuPont Circle, the District was a dangerous and crime-ridden black jungle unfit for human habitation. Back in the Nineties, the D.C. drug and street gangs were so savage they even scared off MS-Thirteen and the Triads. Then Clinton the First came in and they came up with the long-term gentrification project, the idea of which was quietly to run the niggers out of D.C. and whiten the place up. Needless to say, never was so much as a whisper of the true agenda allowed to seep into the public media, although everybody and his dog knew damned well what it was all about."

"That's the way the United States has operated for a century," commented Robert. "When necessary, things may be done for racial reasons, but never under any circumstances must anyone *ever* admit what's happening. Officially, race doesn't exist."

Duke took up the story. "Long story short, over a period of several decades they more or less traded the niggers Maryland in exchange for the District. Back in the Nineteen Seventies, Prince George's County

and Bethesda and Silver Spring were the poshest and whitest of the D.C. suburbs. Now they're black-ruled, and they're the worst slums in the country. You've got extended families of fifty or sixty niggers living in former suburban mansions, more if the mansion has been cut up into apartments. The sewers and the electricity no longer work half the time, and I won't even try to describe how the area smells."

"You think that's bad, try Baltimore," commented Betsy. "Some UN commission reported that the quality of life in Baltimore is now statistically equivalent to Sierra Leone."

"That's right, you had to go up there last year, didn't you?" responded Duke sympathetically.

"Yeah." Betsy shuddered at the memory.

"When Hunter Wallace got into the Oval Office he knew that in order to get done what he needed to get done, he had to keep the ruling class happy and safe," said Vince Cardinale. "Diversity and multiculturalism are all well and good in theory, but in the real world people can't do their best work for ZOG if they're constantly worried about getting mugged, burglarized, raped and murdered by beasts of the field. Once again without any public acknowledgement that something racial was going on, at Wallace's direction the government fortified the District of Columbia, making it the country's largest gated community, which is another old-fashioned circumlocution for lily-white safe area. It's a common phenomenon. What's left of the United States of America now consists of a whole series of Green Zones in major cities—I think the largest ESMA geographically is in Houston's American Zone, where all the Zionist Bible-thumpers are headquartered. The D.C. ESMA is surrounded by a fourteen-foot corrugated steel wall, topped with razor wire and electrified alarms."

"Entry into the District is only through checkpoints," Duke told him. "If you don't have the right card, you have to state your business at the checkpoint, convince the cop on duty it's legit, and they issue you a day pass. If you don't check out into Virginia or Maryland by seven p.m., then the cops come looking for you, guided by the GPS on your FLEC card, and you're in trouble."

Bob remarked, "I remember reading in our North American history class in school that there used to be an expression in the old South and

in South Africa, 'white by night.' It was a safety measure. The kind of thing I don't suppose American students are ever taught these days."

"Yeah, I've heard of that," said Duke. "That's what the District of Columbia is now, white by night, and what all the Green Zones are, although there are a fair number of techie and bureaucratic Asians who have Class A FLECs and Green Zone residence permits as well. The régime considers certain skilled or connected gooks to be honorary whites."

"You need to know all this, Richie, because moving and operating in the Green Zone like you'll be required to do is like living in an aquarium," Cardinale told him. "You're always on view, and virtually every move you make is watched and recorded. Even in public restroom facilities, because the secret police know that people tend to nip into the john for privacy to do things they shouldn't. That's another thing they will never admit, not even by a whisper, but be careful any time you have to go to the can over there. There is no place more certain to be monitored all the time. It took us a lot of doing to get that alpha card for you, and the money we paid Birdie just to make it was the least of it. We had to get an allocated code to program into the chip before we could hack and re-program the code in the server under your name. There are a limited number of those, and getting a new code issued from scratch requires too much background work on too short a notice. So we had to use someone else's code, and make sure that person never tries to cross into the Green Zone while you're there, or else all kinds of bells and whistles would be set off."

"You mean a man died in order to get this card for me?" asked Bob, turning it over in his hands.

"Yes," said Cardinale.

"Don't worry about him," said Betsy casually. "He was an asshole." Bob glanced at her and put that remark away into the ever-expanding I-Don't-Want-To-Know file in his mind.

Cardinale continued. "Inside the District there are closed-circuit security cameras on every street, every corner, every parking lot, inside every bar and restaurant and store, in every public place and a lot of private ones that the DHS has been able to find legal excuses to invade, including rest rooms as I just mentioned. In some cases they actually

have cameras in peoples' private homes, either at their own request or by court order."

"DHS?" asked Bob.

"Department of Homeland Security," said Betsy.

"Yeah, that's a bureaucracy Bush Two created after 9/11," said Cardinale. "They were always kind of a third leg among the old Amurrican secret police agencies. Nobody quite knew what they were for, until they finally found their niche, which is spying on every single American as far as they can, and for as much of the time as they can. It started back in 2010 when one of their subsidiary agencies came up with the first naked body scanners at the airports, and once the American people swallowed that with only a bit of grumbling, the Surveillance State was born. DHS has over a million employees involved in watching and accumulating files and video footage on their fellow citizens. And you can't always see the cameras, either. A lot of the time they have micro-fiber optic gear in place. And they can also hear every word that you even whisper on a crowded street with their directional audio recording; *1984* has now come true in Hunter Wallace's Amurrica."

"I still have difficulty believing that the Americans allowed the liberal régime to outlaw meat and tobacco," said Bob. "I mean, *why*? Okay, smoking is bad for your health if you do it too much, but still, tobacco has been part of the Western world for five hundred years now. And *meat*?"

"Meat is murder," recited Betsy by rote. "Meat is cruelty to animals. We have to stop raising grain to feed beef cattle because it destroys the rain forest. Cow farts cause global warming. McDonald's and Burger King were satanic capitalist conspiracies to make American kids fat. Red meat makes white males aggressive. Well, according to them."

"Maybe that's how the NVA won," remarked Bob, bemused.

"Mmmm, I know the School of Intelligence gave you only a crash course on Whidbey, so I doubt they had much time to clue you in on the whole present political and social sitch here in the States," said Cardinale. "How much do you know about what happened in this country after Longview?"

"Just what I learned in school and what I see in the papers back home, or from watching *The World as It Is* on TV."

"Yeah, great series, that," said Duke. "I saw it last time I was Home. It will get you ten years for hatecrime here if you're caught with a copy."

"Some of the other mobs have a good sideline in bootleg discs of Northwest programs, and *The World as It Is* is one of the most popular," said Cardinale. "We can't do that, because it's a lot more dangerous than butts or beef. In the eyes of the American law it's not just hatecrime, it's Unauthorized Contact, which is a National Security Felony and carries up to life in prison, so we don't dare take the risk. It would draw too much heat. I know the Ministry of Culture inserts untold terabytes of propaganda into the American internet and media networks every year, but most of it's done safely from the Homeland. Anyway, to make a long story as short as possible, after she survived impeachment by handing over the Southwest to the beaners and committing America's full remaining military strength to the defense of Israel, Chelsea Clinton served out her term as a complete lame duck and the world went to hell in a handbasket all around her. That's probably all to the good, in the sense that it kept the Americans distracted during the formative years of the Republic's existence."

"I remember those years in Montana," said Bob soberly. "We were struggling. No way we could have met a full-scale assault back then."

"How about now?" asked Duke bluntly.

"You've been fully briefed?" asked Bob.

"Actually, we're the ones who have been briefing Olympia on the situation," said Cardinale dryly. "Us and the CMI guys here in La Cesspool Grande, whoever and wherever they are, God bless 'em." Bob understood the concept of compartmentalization and he got that Cardinale did not know and could not contact the CMI station in Washington. No one can betray what they don't know.

"Oh, yes sir, of course." Bob looked at Duke. "Now? I think we'll win, but we need to stop it here. We need to stop it here bad."

Cardinale sighed. "Which we'll get into in a bit, but let me go on with my little historical lecture, because if you're going to be a good spy you need to have a full understanding of the politics of the situation. Israel went down a couple of years later, not with a bang but with a whimper. Instead of using their nuclear arsenal at Dimona to blow away

half the Muslim world in a *real* Holocaust, Israel sold their nukes off to various countries, especially Canada and the U.S.A., for the purpose of buying refugee status and legal visas for their Jewish population. In other words, when it came down to the rubber meeting the road, for all their brag and bluster about the Masada Option, the Jews turned and ran instead."

"Big surprise," grunted Betsy.

"Then along comes Hunter Wallace and his One Nation Indivisible," Cardinale went on. "We're still not sure how much of the ONI concept was Wallace's and how much of it came from the think tanks and the various Jewish handlers who already had their hooks into the young Congressman from Alabama from back in his blogging days, but it was well thought out and well planned. America needed help, bad. It was obvious that the old two-party system was on its last legs, that it had failed miserably as successive administrations had made bad call after bad call for decades. They'd just lost a quarter of the country to us and the Aztlan beaners, Israel was gone and the economy was crashing, and the perceived wisdom was that if Amurrica followed the usual pattern of declining empires, it was time for a man on a white horse."

"Yes, we got that in senior class political science in high school," said Bob. "Usually that means some general marching into the corrupt halls of power, the legislature or the executive palace, and taking over by force. Sometimes he sticks some heads on pikes, sometimes he sticks a *lot* of heads on pikes, and sometimes not. This phase is usually followed by a few wars of conquest which fizzle out and leave the country in worse shape than before. Napoleon springs to mind. Then more instability, and depending on how the economy goes, either total collapse or some very anemic state much reduced in size and scope and power. But that didn't happen in the U.S.A. At least not exactly like that."

"Yes, the situation was a bit unique," agreed Cardinale. "In Amurrica's case they'd already tried and failed at the wars of conquest, so it looked like total collapse and the geopolitical breakup of the North American continent into about ten small nations was on the cards."

"Then along comes the Doughboy," said Duke.

"What?" asked Bob.

"One of the nicknames for our illustrious Commander in Chief and Leader of the Free World," said Cardinale. "Don't use it in public, though. Five years for Giving Aid and Comfort to the Enemy, meaning us. It comes from some old television advertisement, but nobody can remember what it meant originally."

"He *looks* like he's made of dough," said Betsy.

Cardinale continued. "Anyway, what either Wallace or the Jews running him, or both, managed to pull off was a kind of controlled man on a white horse scenario that preserved the outward form of the United States. Then through a deliberate retrenchment, they managed to stabilize the remaining U.S.A. into a pale shadow of its former self, but a functioning one nonetheless. That retrenchment is what makes the whole ONI thing so amazing. What Wallace did was he managed to remove ideology from American politics altogether, by creating a moral and ideological tent so big that it has something for everybody. Ever hear the old expression about creating a desert and calling it peace? Hunter Wallace created a cesspool and called it a national consensus. All the special interest groups that comprised the Gorgeous Mosaic were, and are, willing to put up with some really outrageous crap being forced on them, in order to get their own outrageous crap forced on other people. It's like Wallace took the very worst from both right and left and made it the law of the land."

"He was able to get the politicians and pressure groups to go for some weird trade-offs, all right," said Duke with a nod. "Like legalizing prostitution and marijuana, and banning tobacco and meat except for Jews, who of course due to their unique heritage and thousands of years of suffering blah blah blah are exempt from the rules the rest of us have to follow. Well, they always were, but ONI is the first time that's ever been formally acknowledged. In exchange for giving the loony lefty-libs all of the above, Wallace gave the neocons and the 700 Club tub-thumpers their doggie bones as well. He banned abortion, tacitly acknowledging that if the United States wants to survive, they'd better stop slaughtering millions of future taxpayers at birth. He banned the teaching of evolution, and so now American kids who want to get real science degrees have to go to Canada or Europe to take certain courses, which are then quietly accredited to the student back at his American

university. That way the hoot-and-holler crowd is placated without stripping America of doctors and biologists. Wallace also allowed prayer back in the schools, and a nationwide ban on alcohol and marijuana sales on Sundays, not to mention giving shelter and automatic citizenship to three million Jews when Israel became Palestine again, so both the kikes and the tub-thumpers love him to death and can't do enough for him on election day."

"The current president had a unique perspective on America that no else ever had, or if they did they never acted on it," said Cardinale. "Hunter Wallace realized that a lot of the so-called social issues under the old order had to do not so much with people wanting to do things that were forbidden, but with *forcing other people whom they didn't like to do things* they didn't believe in or want to do. If you can give Americans that triumphalist feeling that they're controlling the way other people live, they will adore you for it."

"America isn't about freedom, it's about fun," said Betsy. "The fun of always winning and rubbing other people's noses in the dirt."

"The Germans call it *Schadenfreude*," said Cardinale. "I think that's the reason why the old conservative American élite can never forgive the Northwest Republic—because we *won,* and Amurrica never had to deal with just plain defeat where you count your dead, get over it, and move on. Europe could have taught them a lot about that, if they'd ever had a mind to listen. But there was a good deal of method in the madness. Wallace pulled the remaining American military forces out of most of the rest of the world, and he abolished the draft, and that alone saved enough money to keep the economy from tanking. He has re-professionalized the American military to a great degree, not to mention whitening it up through strictly enforced educational and legal requirements for enlistment, so forth and so on. The days of drafting street gangs *en masse* into the army and FATPO are more or less over, until now, anyway, when they seem to have revived that kind of recruitment policy for this Operation Chain Link thing they're running down at Fort Bragg. I think we know what kind of muscle they want occupying the Northwest. But the American military itself is actually in the best shape it's been in for decades. Wallace never made any bones about the fact that the new improved American military is to be used

to re-conquer the Northwest Republic and re-unite the country from Sea to Shining Sea, as he puts it."

"How about re-conquering Aztlan?" asked Bob.

"Ah, but he has a legal fig leaf for not doing that," Cardinale reminded him. "Technically speaking, Aztlan is still part of the United States, remember. They are a territory like Puerto Rico used to be before it became a state. They still send two Senators each to Washington from California, Nevada, Arizona, Nuevo Mejico and Tejas Españoles. It doesn't have to be re-conquered, and also that means that no one can complain about all the beaners here in the rest of the country, because technically speaking they're all Americans now."

"Okay, I suppose we'd better move on to why I'm here now," said Bob with a sigh. "Operation Belladonna. Who chose that name, by the way? Belladonna is a poisonous plant."

"I chose it," said Cardinale. "In Italian it also means beautiful lady. You'll see why when you meet her. But you're supposed to remember her from before she became a Lost Baby, right?"

"I last saw her when she was ten years old," explained Bob. "I was fourteen when the war ended. She had a crush on me, which I treated with the usual adolescent silliness and rudeness, and I'll always regret that, because we never got old enough together to sort it out. Yeah, Peanut was a cute kid, a sweet kid, and she actually helped hide my NVA sister after that slaughterhouse in Helena. She thought it was all a big game, of course, but she kept her lip zipped about it until after Longview. She's got brains and guts and circumspection, or at least she did at age ten. But at Whidbey I was also given the file you guys accumulated on her once she popped up on your radar, and I understand that she's pretty messed up now. I guess forcible separation from her family and twelve years growing up as a pampered rich kid in a lefty-lib household full of money and drugs and bullshit will do that to a girl. She has a baby of her own now, you say?"

"A toddler," said Cardinale. "A daughter, Allura, aged eighteen months. The father is some trust fund weenie from New York she met at Brown University, who now seems to be out of the picture. We checked him out, and he's a dweeb interested in nothing but spending daddy's money on fast cars and heavy dope. He's never even seen the

child, and she is legally Allura Halberstam. Interestingly, her official legal guardians are Marvin and Amber Halberstam."

"What kind of man doesn't want his name to go on in his children?" wondered Bob, shaking his head.

"Very few white American males of that age are men," said Betsy.

"One of the hooks the Office recommended I use to get her on board is to promise to get both Georgia and the child Home if she co-operates," said Bob. "If she doesn't even care enough to maintain legal custody of her own daughter, I'm not sure that will work."

"That's why you're here. You need to make contact with her in the guise of an old friend to go over old times and deliver those messages from her father and her brother you brought with you. You'll have to evaluate her as a person and as a potential intelligence asset, and if we think there is even a chance she might go for it, you have to lay our proposal on her."

"'Hey, Peanut, will you do us favor? Fuck a perverted president for your country, a country you haven't seen since you were a child and probably don't remember much?'" sighed Bob. "No need to look concerned, sir. I know this has to be done and I'm the guy best suited to do it. I wasn't allowed to bring anything personal Out Here, but if I could, I'd show you a picture of my wife and my two children back in Missoula. Georgia's my past, and they're my future. Don't worry, I'm up for this."

"Glad to hear it," said Cardinale dryly.

Betsy spoke up sympathetically. "Since we're talking nasty details, I suppose you need to know there will be very little actual . . . well, Hunter Wallace's proclivities aren't normal. They can't be. He's not medically capable of it, not for any sustained period."

"Yeah, I know, hypo-gonadism. They told me all that at Whidbey. He has to . . ." Bob waved his hand in the air vaguely.

"Substitute," Betsy completed for him. "I know. I run with a lot of other licensed girls from the high-end agencies. I have to. They're a mine of information the Office has to tap, and I've heard things. If she goes for it, you need to do your best to make her understand what she'll be getting into so she'll be prepared and she won't freak."

Bob stared. "How the hell am I supposed to tell her . . . I mean Jesus, sir, men and women who aren't involved with one another don't even *talk* about things like that back home, not even the normal stuff! Not like here, where the weirdest and filthiest crap I've ever seen is on every front page and every screen!"

"You probably shouldn't try to talk to her about it," said Cardinale. "Let Bets do that. We run our assets in pairs, which is a little dangerous if it goes bad, but much more effective in the long run. It helps for an asset to know there's more than one of us and if one handler has to disappear quick, a new one doesn't have to start cold and re-build the trust relationship from scratch. Plus a female asset can often relate better to a female handler. You'll need a backup handler for this girl if anything happens to you, and there may be times when she needs some tag-teaming to keep her steady and keep her on point. You may have to play good cop-bad cop, or good spy-bad spy. Betsy will be your backup, and later on, you'll have the Zombie Master as well. I'll tell you about him in a bit. Belladonna won't ever see me or Duke. We'll get you inside with her first to scope her out, get a read on her state of mind, and then when it looks safe we'll bring in Betsy. She'll handle all the down-low girl-talk stuff with Georgia."

"That's if we get that far at all," said Bob. "You know there's a chance Georgia may have gone totally bad? Maybe she's in love with a nigger. She may be perfectly happy with her life, such as it seems to be. She may not want to see me at all. She may not want to Come Home, ever. She may not want to be reminded of what she left behind. Or she may just plain freak out as soon as she realizes who I am and why I'm here. She may pick up the phone and call the FBI."

"That's a possibility," agreed Cardinale. "We'll have contingency plans to E&E you if it looks like you're in danger, but I grant you, the risk is not small. But we don't think she's totally lost. For one thing, she kept the baby, even though she didn't have to. ONI may have outlawed abortion, but people on the Halberstams' socio-economic level in this society can get around that easily. Hell, anybody can, for the price of an air ticket to Toronto or London. Plus she could have picked up a pretty penny by selling the kid on the adoption market. It Takes a Village is still around, and white infants go for top dollar. She didn't do that."

"For another thing, we did a sneak-and-peak in her apartment in Georgetown when she was spending the weekend with her family in the Hamptons," said Duke. "Had to arrange a localized outage on the security cams to do it, but we had about half an hour inside. She's not dumb enough to look at NAR stuff on her computer—almost nobody is, since the FBI and DHS don't bother to conceal the fact that they do random searches on millions of people every month, and anybody caught with anything originating in the Republic gets five years and mandatory Attitude Modification."

"Chemicals combined with electroshock to purge your mind of wicked racist thoughts," put in Betsy.

"But she does have a secret stash of old coffee-table books hidden in one of her closets," Duke went on. "She must have done the rounds of every old bookshop in the District and New York to find some of these books. All of them full of big full-page color photographs of the Northwest, Washington and Oregon and Idaho, but especially Montana. The pages with pictures of Missoula on them are all loose and well worn, and most of them have some odd stains on them."

"Tears," said Betsy.

"You're sure?" asked Bob. The thought of Georgia taking out her forbidden books and weeping over pictures of Montana in the night filled him with sadness.

"I'm sure," said Betsy.

"She remembers, Richie," said Cardinale. "She remembers enough, anyway. You're going to have to make her remember more, make her willing to do anything to break away from the luxurious toilet she's spent the past twelve years in and go back to where she and her daughter belong."

"And we will do that?" demanded Bob.

"You're damned straight we will," said Cardinale, and Bob knew he spoke the truth. "Always with the proviso that death and history don't intervene, and there's never any guarantee against that. I can't say when or how, and I'm not going to lie to you, this is a damned dangerous thing we're doing. You and she both might get hurt, bad. But if she does this for us, the very minute we believe she is in any danger, then we'll find a way to extract her and you can take her and the child back to the Homeland."

"Presuming the Homeland isn't in the middle of a war," said Duke glumly.

"If that's the case then I'll find someplace safe for Georgia and the baby, and then I'm going back," said Bob. "Everyone I have is in Missoula, and if I can't help them from here then I'm going home and reporting to my reserve unit, or whoever's still fighting."

"Understood," said Cardinale. "We know you're not full time Office, you're just here on this one project, and if that's the way it plays out, we'll help. Duke, suppose you run him over to the District now? Best use the Key Bridge this time of day, and let's make damned sure that FLEC card of his works. Once you're there, show him around and start getting him oriented. Park someplace and take him for a ride on the buses and trains. Most of what you'll be doing over there you can do on foot, and if you end up having to do the Resurrection Shuffle in the Green Zone, boxed in like you are you don't need to be hampered by a car." Bob thrilled at hearing the old NVA term for going on the run. "We disable the GPS in all of ours, but still, in an enclosed space like that a lone man can move and hide better on foot than a vehicle on the street, if they're looking for you."

Suddenly the phone on Cardinale's desk rang. He picked it up and opened it. "Yeah?" He listened for a bit. "Okay, got it" he said, closing the phone. "Crap!"

"What is it, boss?" asked Duke.

"Our girl just called in," said Cardinale. "Her usual order, three cartons of Belmont filters. She likes Canadian cigarettes for some reason. I wanted to give you a couple of days to get your bearings before initiating contact, Rich, but sounds like destiny is playing your song. You up for it now?"

"Let's go," said Bob.

An hour later Richie the buttlegger from Mayor Daley's old neighborhood rang the doorbell of a refined semi-detached brownstone in the suburb of Georgetown, ironically located in the northwest quadrant of the District of Columbia. The intercom buzzed. "Who is it?" came a young woman's voice.

Bob leaned down to the speaker. "My name's Richie. I just came over from Arlington, and I got the botanical material you wanted." He

was acutely conscious of the small white camera on a pole across the street, panning slowly back and forth, a small red light flashing. The damned things were everywhere, all right, and he was doing an illegal drug deal right in front of one.

"What's the password?" the woman inside giggled.

Bob rolled his eyes, but he had been briefed. "Joe sent me."

Several locks on the door rattled, and Georgia opened it. Bob remembered a pretty little child; what he now saw before him was a sorceress, a temptress of light, a vision in jeans and a pale blue cotton work shirt. Her skin was white as porcelain, her long yellow hair so light as almost to be white, her eyes the clear blue of the evening sky yet ringed like Millie's, with a darker blue that made them piercing. She had the face of a Botticelli angel, a body slim and soft and from what he could tell beneath the cloth and denim, perfect in form. He understood why the boss had named this operation Belladonna. He could have been looking at Dante's Beatrice, if Beatrice had been in the custom of receiving callers with a smoldering marijuana joint dangling from her lips.

"You're new," she drawled, with another giggle. Her eyes were glittering and her pupils dilated.

"Yeah, just blew in from the Windy City. Here's your stuff," Bob said, handing her a paper sack from the gym bag he carried.

"Three grand, right?" she said, handing him a wad of bills. He stuffed the money in his back pocket, so the camera could see it.

"You don't remember me, do you?" Bob asked her.

"Mmmm, now that you mention it . . ." She looked at his face, trying to focus. "You brought the steaks and real Texas chili for Congressman Ortega's barbecue last weekend?"

"No," he said. "You did a favor for my sister once, long ago. You and Kevin hid her from some unsavory characters in your father's garage. Hi, Peanut."

She stared at him, startled, and then all of a sudden she screamed *"Bobby!"* and threw her arms around him, crushing him and burning his neck with the joint, which she had forgotten to take out of her mouth.

God, she's beautiful! was Robert's first thought, and *God, she's stoned!* was his second.

X

The Lost Baby

(12 years and six months after Longview)

Ha, banishment! be merciful, say "death;"
For exile hath more terror in his look,
Much more than death.
—Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene 3

Fortunately for Robert Campbell, Georgia was alone in the townhouse when he showed up at her door, or in her excited state she would probably have dragged him in and introduced him to all her friends, including the black and Jewish ones, and gotten herself arrested for Unauthorized Contact with someone from the dreaded Northwest Republic. Bob was never able to reconstruct accurately the first half hour he spent with her inside the brownstone, except that any worries he had about getting her to open up were laid to rest. He found himself inside the thick-carpeted living room and seated on a plush sofa, while Georgia Myers, or Halberstam, sat beside him, clinging to him like a limpet and babbling in a soft surreal drone, a stream of consciousness speech or recitation that seemed to have been bottled up inside her waiting for this moment of release, when she finally had a safe audience. It was as if she had been waiting for him to come to her for the past twelve years, so she could finally tell someone. In that first 30 minutes, he got her whole pathetic life story.

Some men would have found it amusing and many more annoying, no matter how beautiful a girl was who grabbed onto them and wouldn't let go, and who wouldn't stop chattering. Bob found it horrifying and searing, because he understood that it was a story she had been desperate to tell for over half her lifetime. From the moment her mother had

bundled her into the SUV in Missoula that day, telling her they were going to the mall to try and find some ice cream, Georgia Myers had no one, no one at all, that she could talk to truthfully and openly. Every moment of her life since then had been a lie forced on her by every other human being around her, the essence of the American experience. It had possibly driven her mad.

It was all there. The child's first realization that the SUV driven by her mother was headed out of town and not for the mall. Her turning around and noticing the packed bags and suitcases in the back. Her tears and pleas to her mother to turn around and go back home, and the dawning realization that she would never see her father or her brother again as her mother babbled on and on, every left-wing liberal cliché from the past century droning from Amber's lips like a constant low-key air raid siren.

There was the terror of approaching the new border, where Amber had described to her in detail the horrors that would be perpetrated against them both if the evil Nazi border guards caught them—this had been where Georgia had learned what rape was. In point of fact there were no Nazi border guards, evil or otherwise. The only thing they saw while leaving the Northwest Republic were a few Civil Guards directing traffic or helping broken-down motorists. Their vehicle wasn't searched by threatening armed men until they entered the American sector at a military police checkpoint at an on-ramp on the eastern side of Interstate Fifteen, and then they were back in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. Later on, at a hundred cocktail parties and formal dinners, Amber would amplify their escape into a daring midnight break for freedom, dodging Nazi tanks and SS goons with Dobermans. The liberal audience avidly hung onto her every word, and by then Georgia was always too apathetic or too bombed to contradict her. After a while, Georgia's memory got so fuzzy that she sometimes couldn't recall what really happened, so maybe there *had* been SS men and Dobermans after all.

Above all, Georgia remembered two things from that long, claustrophobic road trip: the constant search for a "decent" motel at night—Red Lion and Day's Inn were for middle-class plebes; the daughter of Washington liberal aristocracy had to bed down in a Sheraton

or at least a Holiday Inn—and the endless, blatting monologue all the way to D.C., wherein her mother constantly justified, rationalized, recapped and ranted on and on about what she was doing, and how it was absolutely the right thing, no question at all, almost as if she were trying to convince herself.

"I have dreams all the time," Georgia told Bob as she poured it all out, clinging to him. "I dream about Dad and Kevin. I dream about you and Jenny. I dream about Missoula, the blue mountains on the skyline all around us. I dream about waking up in the morning in our old house on Daly Avenue and finding the windows covered with snow and Dad having to shovel a tunnel from the front door to the street. I dream about you and me and Kevin and Jenny running around playing all over the halls in the university, running out on all the lawns, and up on Mount Sentinel. Some of the dreams are bad, real bad, but the worst nightmare of all is that I am stuck in that car forever, driving east with my mother going on and on and on about how she's really doing the right thing for my sake and how Dad and Kevin are sick with racism because they're men and for the sake of our true womanhood—yeah, she used that phrase—we have to get away from them and never let them poison our lives. Bobby, when I die, if God decides I have to go to hell for being the worthless little twist I am, then He will put me back in that car with my mother forever, just rolling down the highway in the dark as she goes on and on with all that crap, denying and destroying everything I've ever known and loved, and she just will not *shut up*."

Then came the years after they settled in under Georgia's grandmother's roof over on K Street. There was the money, the Euro-nannies and Third World servants, the expensive and exclusive private schools, and the constant procession of liberal drinky-dos and events and discussion groups that Lily Escott, the original rich liberal Democrat battle-axe from hell, ran out of her home. Lily prided herself on maintaining a D.C. anachronism in the internet age, an old-fashioned liberal *salon*, which she admitted she tried to pattern after the *salon* of Madame Roland during the French Revolution. The historical fact that Madame Roland was eventually guillotined by her ultra-left former comrades always seemed to escape Lily's notice.

There were the early years of psychotherapy with expensive Jewish psychiatrists to get Georgia over the trauma of having survived the Nazi occupation of Montana. "That's what I am, Bobby," she told him in a monotone, sitting on the sofa and still gripping him. "I'm an official survivor of the Cataclysm, as it's called. Kind of like Holocaust survivors were fifty years ago. As Cataclysm Survivors Mom and I both get a government check every month, not that we need it. I use mine to buy dope and booze and ciggies. You'd be amazed how many people from the Northwest survived the Cataclysm, once President Wallace started passing those checks out."

"Rather like the miraculous multiplication of Jewish Holocaust survivors from the 1970s and 1980s onward, I imagine," Bobby replied with a chuckle. "Back home we call you a Lost Baby. There were all too many of those in real life, kids like you, white children of the Runaways who were taken away from their Homeland and forced to grow up in what was left of Amurrica, brainwashed into liberalism and into hating their own race."

"Why didn't the Republic stop her?" asked Georgia dully. "Why did nobody on the NAR side even stop the damned car and ask where the hell we were going?"

Bob sighed. "Georgia, that debate has been raging within the Republic ever since it happened, and it's caused more criticism by the Opposition in Parliament and from the people themselves than anything we've ever done. The government of the time made that decision. Most of the ministers from back then have since said publicly that it was the worst call they ever made, and the Lost Babies have become part of our national memory and legend. Untold tens and hundreds of thousands of white children, lost forever to the soul-poison that is America. Every month the NAR media runs big stories about Lost Babies who Come Home again, sometimes after having to run the McCurtain where they really *do* have to face machine guns and Dobermans and minefields, just not on our side of the border.

"But we have to be fair and realistic. You were only ten in those days, Peanut. I was fourteen, and so I remember a little more. Things were really shaky back then, and I don't mean just ice cream shortages

in the stores. After Longview we went through four bad months, a time they call the Consolidation, or some call it the Cleanup."

"I remember some," said Georgia. "Mom was really scared. If she has any legitimate excuse for what she did to me, I suppose that would be it. She was really afraid."

"The government of the Republic was new, its hold on power was shaky, our army was only half-trained and we barely had a navy or an air force at all," said Bob. "We didn't know whether or not the Congress and Chelsea Clinton here in D.C. were going to simply tear up the Longview Treaty and invade the Republic full force to try and re-conquer us. That's one reason why the stuff that went on during the Cleanup had to be kept so quiet. One thing the Republic couldn't afford was to have a lot of atrocity stories seeping out, including stories about how we were kidnapping huge numbers of children from their parents and putting them in makeshift orphanages or something of the kind so they could supposedly be brainwashed, like Amber was afraid we'd do to you. And we couldn't afford a lot of sullen and resentful people living in the Northwest who were just waiting for the Americans to come back, who were ready and willing to stab us in the back. We got rid of the worst ones we could catch during the Cleanup, but we simply couldn't identify and kill all the people who were potential threats, and so it was decided to let them get the hell out if they wanted to. They were encouraged to do so. We knew it would cause us trouble later, but we opted for the short-term fix that we could actually implement. Georgia, Clancy and Kevin told me about that time the Guardsman came to deliver your house documents and Amber ran off at the mouth to him at the door. If you'd stayed, chances are that eventually there would have been another knock on the door and BOSS really *would* have come for your mother. As horrible as she's been to you, would you have wanted you and Clancy and Kevin to have to go through that?"

"I guess not," said Georgia dully. "I still love her. I have to. She's my mom. She was doing what she thought was right, but it was just so, so wrong." Finally, tears began to trickle down Georgia's cheeks.

"Go on, honey, tell me the rest of it," he urged her.

"Not much to tell, what there is of it is pretty bad, and I'm probably boring you to death," she snuffled.

"No, Peanut, I want to hear it all."

Georgia's teenaged years had been luxurious, but a blasted heath emotionally. More expensive prep schools, then a bought-and-paid-for admission to Columbia because she couldn't cut it academically for Lily and Amber's alma mater at Brown University, or at any of the remaining five Sisters—Barnard, Mount Holyoke, Bryn Mawr, Smith, or Wellesley. There were carefully selected expensive friends whose brains were stuffed with cotton, and the endless therapy her mother and grandmother made sure she got, not to heal her wounded mind or savaged soul, but increasingly to blame her academic failure and social lapses on PCSD, Post Cataclysm Stress Disorder. Lily Escott was glad to have them around as part of her entourage; Northwest "survivors" were a chic accessory to wealthy liberals post-Longview. There was the endless round of cocktail parties and fundraisers and weekend retreats to the Hamptons and the country clubs where Amber and Georgia were trotted out and introduced as prize specimens in Lily's personal collection of trendy-left memorabilia. "This is my daughter and my granddaughter. Cataclysm Survivors, you know," she would say. "They had to flee from the Northwest with Stormtroopers chasing them on motorcycles and shooting at them with machine guns."

The drugs and the booze started at age 14, the same year Amber married high-powered Jewish lobbyist and attorney Marvin Halberstam. First came the purloining of liquor from Lily's sideboard and the Hamptons wine cellar for Georgia and her friends, then illegal grass, then legal grass when the ban was revoked, then the pills. Georgia never had to buy pills from a street dealer, because between them both, Lily and Amber had every prescription painkiller, tranquilizer, narcotic and male or female sexual stimulant known to pharmaceutical science.

The boys started at 15, the traffic tickets and wrecked automobiles at 16, and the first runaway escapade combining all three plus an illegal tobacco possession charge occurred at age 17. Six months later Georgia was rounded up in a police raid on an unlicensed "youth club" in Anacostia, and her date for the evening was found to have over twenty Habanos and Montecristos on him and twelve cartons of Marlboros in the car, which he had been planning to sell at the rave. The car was Georgia's, and she was looking at an accessory charge on a distribution

rap, but Marvin Halberstam got her out of the police station and home by midnight, and her name never appeared in any arrest report or media story. The boyfriend got three years in a penal factory and was beaten to death by the Zulu prison gang when he bungled a promised cigarette deal.

Georgia's daughter Allura had been the result of a cliché night of drunken freshman carelessness at Columbia. Georgia didn't even refer to the father. "Mom keeps the baby because she says I'm not a fit mother," she said casually, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. "She's probably right. I'm stoned most of the time and I keep waking up beside guys whose names I can't remember. Maybe I'll get my act together someday and I can have her with me. But what the hell, I'm young now, might as well enjoy myself, right?"

Bob thought of his own kids, and he barely refrained from tearing into her with an angry lecture on parental responsibility, because that wasn't what he was there for. The Northwest Republic needed this young woman, needed her to do grotesque and sickening things in order to stop a war and save God alone knew how many white lives, and moralizing judgments were not on the menu. "But you kept Allura," he told her gently. "You didn't have to. People as rich as your family don't have to obey the law. You could have gotten rid of the child."

"Yeah, Mom wanted me to go to Canada and take a scrape," said Georgia carelessly. Bobby winced at the cold and heartless term, although he knew it was standard lingo in Hunter Wallace's Amurrica. "She was insistent about it, but I muled up on her and I wouldn't do it."

"You kept the child to defy your mother?" asked Bob, gently probing.

"Nah," said Georgia "It just seems like such a rotten thing to do, killing a baby. Especially your own. Like, bad karma, ya know? I mean, it's not like it's her fault her mother is some skeezy slut who was too drunk to make the guy wear a condom, is it?" It was a spark of goodness in all the rotten darkness of Georgia's life, and for the first time, Bob was encouraged. *She might go for it,* he thought.

About the time of Allura's birth, Lily Escott had died of advanced cirrhosis of the liver; a lifetime of champers and Chardonnay at the

liberal drinky-dos followed by long nights of Chivas and Stoly chasers neat finally caught up to her. Marvin Halberstam gallantly took over the role of guardian angel to his wife's screwed-up kid. Halberstam sat Georgia down in his study in the house on K Street, which Amber had inherited, and told her, "Look, chickadee, so far you're just an embarrassment, not a disaster. I can live with that. This is D.C. and it's not like this kind of *tsimmes* is uncommon from your generation, plus you got the whole escape from Stalag-17 thing going for you, so you always gotta excuse. Me being Joosh, I of all people can tell you, such an excuse can cover a multitude of sins. Our people used the Holocaust as our excuse for a hundred years, and now we've got the loss of Israel to last us another century.

"Look, let's face facts," Halberstam had continued, waving his thoroughly illegal Cohiba cigar in the air. "You flunked out of Columbia, and any more college would be a waste of time and money. It's not like you're ever going to have to earn your own living or you're ever going to need an education for anything. On the other hand, at this point I don't see any need to ship you off to Paris or Honolulu or any of the other places of exile where our kind of people dump their family skeletons. You're not that far gone yet."

"Gee, thanks!" said Georgia. "Praise from Caesar."

"So such a deal I'll make you: I am getting for you a job at Loughlin and Wintersham, the publicists. You start off at three hundred grand a year, which I know is peanuts in this town, but there are perks. You get Class A federal government medical insurance, because the firm handles a few government accounts, and that includes rehab whenever you need to dry out a bit. You'll have a full expense account and you can write off most of your meals, just say you were with a client, or you can fill up on *hors d'oeuvres* every day from all the receptions and cocktail parties you'll be going to. If you don't want, you'll never have to buy any groceries. The work is easy; you could do it in your sleep. You'll be writing up press releases and throwing parties for Congresspeople and corporations and big-shot writer and professor types with books they want to plug, general schmoozing, you get the idea. You like parties, right? Now you can plan your own, with somebody else's money. Plus we'll get you a nice place of your own, in Georgetown maybe, and your

mom and I will take care of your rent and utilities. We keep Allura out of your hair; we pay for the nanny and the pre-school and everything. In return, all we ask is that you try, try, try not to fuck up and to keep your name off TV and out of the internet gossip pages, at least until you can find a nice sugar daddy to marry. Maybe a Senator. With your looks and that body, a Senator you should be *shtupping.* If only I hadn't met your mother first . . ." Halberstam shook his nose regretfully and looked down it at Georgia with a lust he had never tried to disguise from her, although he was careful to hide the fact from Amber and Amber's attorneys who controlled the Escott multi-millions.

"Okay, you got a deal," Georgia had told him. "You guys can get on with your big political wheeling and dealing and your backroom intrigues, and I'll just go off in a corner and hide like a little mouse. Two conditions. First, I want you to get one of your rabbi buddies to get me a kosher card saying I'm a Jew, so I can have a hamburger or some chicken on my Caesar salad without getting arrested."

"Done," Halberstam replied.

"Second condition is for you, Marvin. If I ever feel your hand down my bra again, I not only tell Mom, I file a lawsuit the size of the Capitol dome against you, and I e-mail copies of it to every news site and gossip page in the world, plus a number of private e-mail addresses I've managed to accumulate in my years of hanging around over on K Street. I may pass myself around like popcorn to everybody else, but not you, Marvin. You don't get any. Not ever. Got it?"

"*Oy*, chickadee, you drive a hard bargain . . ." moaned Marvin.

At this point in Georgia's Molly-Bloom-like stream-of-consciousness ramble, Bob made a second clinical mental note to himself. *No Jews, no niggers, no other women figuring so far in her little Rabelaisian epic,* he noted clinically. *She still seems to have some standards, in spite of it all.* He was glad he could say that to himself.

Finally, she ran down and let him go. "Jesus, Bob, you must think I'm really nuts," she said sniffing. "Sorry about all that. It's just that I don't have any real friends I can talk to, at least no one who wouldn't turn me in or try to use it to get me in bed."

"Well, you do now," said Bob.

"I didn't even offer you anything." She waved toward the liquor cabinet. "Brandy, single-malt, imported vodka? You want a joint?" She proffered the marijuana pack.

"No thanks, just coffee will be fine. Black." Georgia brought him a cup, broached one of the packets of Belmont filters he'd brought and lit a cigarette. "You might want to lay off the hard stuff and the weed yourself for a bit, Peanut. I need to talk to you about some things."

She smiled and nodded. "Yeah, I figured. Why did you come here, Bob? And why are you working as a street buttlegger in Washington, D.C., of all things? I may be a slut and a stoner, but I'm not stupid. At least not yet. Give me a couple of more years on the booze and the weed and I may be stupid, but not now."

"Well, for one thing, I brought you a message from your father and your brother," said Robert, avoiding the main subject. He took out two data chips and nodded to the huge plasma screen that filled one wall in the living room. "Before I play this for you, I have to run this program to make sure your TV's memory chip doesn't keep any record of this, nothing that the DHS and FBI surveillance can locate if they do a spot check on your home's hard drive." Bob referred to the central hard drive in the apartment that ran all the electronic appliances, from Georgia's phone to her TV to her personal laptop dataplayer. "I find it difficult to comprehend a society where a father sending his daughter a video letter could get her thrown in prison for watching it, but that's the way of things here in the Land of Liberty these days. No kidding, Georgia, this is Unauthorized Contact, and you can get in really bad trouble."

"I don't think so," said Georgia with a giggle.

"Why not?"

"You tell me your secret and I'll tell you mine," she said with a sly smile.

"Do you want to hear this from your dad and your brother?" he asked bluntly. "Even though you'll be breaking U.S. law by doing so?" It was her first test, but he didn't tell her that.

"I've been waiting to hear it for twelve years, Bobby. Play it."

He ran the program to bypass the TV's memory chip, and then he inserted the chip he had come all this way to bring her. Clancy Myers'

tired and aging face appeared on the screen, the book-lined shelves of his home library behind him. "Look familiar?" asked Bob.

"God, he looks old! They still live in the house on Daly Avenue?" asked Georgia, her voice choking.

"Clancy does," Bob told her. "Kevin and his wife have their own home now, but Clancy stayed. He always said he wanted it to be there for you if you ever came back."

Clancy spoke on the wide plasma screen. "Hello, Georgia. I hope Bob is able to get in touch with you and give you this message from Kevin and me. Honey, there is so much I want to say to you that I don't know where to begin, but I know I have to keep this short. Kevin and I are both well, Kevin is married now, to a fine girl from Helena, and you have a little nephew. His name is Kevin Junior." A picture of a smiling infant just barely able to sit up was flashed up on the screen for about ten seconds, then Clancy's face returned. "Georgia, from the very day you disappeared, your brother and I have never ceased to love you and worry about you and think about you, every day." (Clancy had been advised by the WPD to refrain from including any adverse comments or even any reference at all to Georgia's mother, since it was unknown for certain what Amber and Georgia's relationship was like.) "I don't know what your life has been like, or exactly where you are now, but I know that here in Montana our lives have been poorer and sadder without you. We have missed you every day, in a hundred different ways. Honey, I'm going to ask you something now, and that is that you try to Come Home, even if it's only for a visit, and bring your little girl with you. Yes, honey, we know about Allura, and I want you to know that we love her and welcome her into our family, even if we're never able to meet her. Bob Campbell is going to try to deliver this message for us, and if he has been able to do so, you'll see that he's grown into a very brave and handsome young man. Well, that's the kind of young men who always did come out of Montana. Bob is going to talk to you about perhaps Coming Home for good. I don't know if you've ever thought about coming back, Georgia. I honestly hope that you're happy where you are, but from what I've been told, I can't see that being the case. Not under the—circumstances. If I'm right about that, and you want to Come Home, Bob will help you. I know it's illegal where you

are to even plan to visit the Republic without a permit, and it can get you in a lot of trouble. You're the one who has to decide whether going or staying will be worse. But if you do want to come, talk to Bobby about it. I was told I have to keep this short, so I'll just say that even if we never see you again, my beloved child, we will never forget you and we will never cease to mourn your loss from our lives. We love you, Georgia, always."

Kevin and his wife Tamara came onto the screen next. Tammy was holding the baby Kevin Junior in her arms. The infant was grinning into the videocam, displaying a single new tooth in his mouth, and trying to grab the camera lens, from which his mother had to hold him back. "Hello, Peanut," said Kevin, his face sad. "Not sure if you even remember what I look like at all, but this is me, Kevin. This is my wife Tamara . . ."

"Tammy," she interjected. "Hi, Georgia."

"Tammy," Kevin corrected with a smile. "And this is your nephew, Kevin Junior. Say hello to your aunt Georgia, Kevvie." The baby shrieked wordlessly and clawed at the camera with a maniacal grin. His father waved the baby's tiny arm and hand at the lens. "We're told that I have a niece and Kevvie has a cousin," Kevin senior went on. "Say hello to your cousin Allura, Kevvie!" He waved the baby's hand again and the infant burbled. "I hope that our two children can meet and play together someday. Maybe even grow up together. Georgia, please, talk to Bobby, listen to what he has to say, and do what you have to do to come back to us. When we lost you, Peanut, it was the worst thing that ever happened to Dad and me. I'm young and I've been able to bounce back, especially now that I have Tammy and this little hellraiser. But Dad's never been right since you went away, not really. He once told me the only reason he had for living was to see you once more before he died. Yeah, I know, that may sound like a grim reason for Coming Home, but I don't care why you do it, just come. You and Allura are something that's missing here, Georgie, something we all have a right to. This new land that's been created for everyone of our kind since the Revolution—it's something you and Allura have a right to as well, and no matter what you've been told or by whom, you need to come out

here and see it and understand what you're missing. This is where you belong, Georgie. Please. Come Home."

Bob turned off the TV and removed the datachip from the panel. "I have to take this with me," he said. "I know you'd like to have it, but it's too dangerous." He looked over and saw that Georgia was sitting on the sofa with her face buried in her hands, her body shaking with dry, silent sobs. He sat quietly until she lifted her tear-stained face.

"What exactly do you do back in the Northwest Republic, Bob?" she asked, surprising him. "Let me guess. You're a soldier. I meet a lot of military guys here, some of whom I screw, and so I know the type."

"Every man in the Republic is a soldier," he told her. "A lot of the women, too. We have to be. We're never going back, Georgia. Never. So yes, I'm a reservist and I do a few weekends and thirty days of active duty every year. But as a matter of fact, in my day job, I'm a cop. I'm a detective in the Civil Guard's Criminal Investigation Division, the CID. I'm Out Here at the request of another agency, because I knew you when you were a kid, and they figured I'd be the best person to ask you a favor."

"You're a spy, and you want me to spy on President Wallace for the Republic," she said baldly.

Robert Campbell's blood ran ice cold in his veins. *Jesus Christ on a raft!* he thought. *What the hell? How did she know, and who else knows?* "Yes," he said in a level voice, and waited for her to explain.

"I got the call a few weeks ago, and I did my final interview and polygraph with the Secret Service yesterday," she told him. "The head of the President's Secret Service detail is this big black guy named Jimbo, and he had to okay me. That's why I wasn't worried about a DHS spot check picking up Dad and Kevin's vidlet; all the spooks have already gone through all my hard drives and portable devices with a fine-toothed comb, the more so because I was born in Montana and they're worried that some mysterious stranger from my past might approach me one day to betray my country and my Doughboy. They just missed you by a couple of days, or maybe you just missed them, but right now, I'm squeaky clean in official eyes. I report to the White House for my first night shift, I guess you'd call it, on Monday at four p.m. They've got the drill down after years of practice. After I fill out all

my tax forms in Human Resources, I go up and do the President of the United States. Maybe in the residence itself, since Hunter isn't married and he doesn't have a wife to keep in the dark, but more probably in the little side room off the Oval Office with the minibar and the big comfy sofa that every President since John F. Kennedy has kept for the purpose. They call it the executive lounge. Apparently, Reagan never used it for that purpose, but every other president since then has. They even let me in on one of the little Secret Service inside jokes: Hillary had more women in the executive lounge than Bill ever did, and they were better looking."

"And you agreed to this?" asked Bob. "Why, Georgia?" *Why did you agree to let that pervert near you?* he thought in anguish. *Why, Peanut?*

She was brutally frank. "The bennies are great, I get to hang out in the West Wing as well as the residence. I even get my own little cubbyhole office and some data entry and filing to do, to account for my presence in the building, and working in the White House still has a hell of a lot of prestige. My mom can start bringing me to cocktail parties again. I get to ride on Air Force One and be around a lot of exciting people and things going on. My mom and my stepdad are over the moon. I've finally made them proud of me. Marvin is already slavering over all the new contacts and inside info I can get him. I signed a six month personal services contract which Hunter can renew, but only with my consent, which I gather he never gets from any of his girls. Six months on my back doing what I would do anyway, for recreation or just out of boredom, and I'm set for life with money of my own so I can support Allura and not be dependent on my mother and that goddamned horn dog Marvin any more. Call it a career move." She shook her head sadly. "You came here expecting to find a little girl, but she's lost and gone forever. All you found was a drunk and a druggie and now a high-class whore. I'm sorry, Bobby, more sorry than I can say that you know what I am now and you can't remember me as that little girl ever again. But do you want my father and my brother to see me as I am, too? Am I the little girl they want to welcome home again? I don't think so. God knows what you'll tell them. I'll leave that up to you. But Peanut can't go home to Daly Avenue again, ever. She's dead. She died when she crossed Interstate Fifteen that day."

"Did she?" Bob got up and moved to a wall where hung a framed linen sampler similar to the ones well-bred young ladies hundreds of years before turned out from their sewing baskets. On it was a poem, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Requiem:*

UNDER the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you 'grave for me:
Here he lies where he long'd to be;
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

"From my arts and crafts class at one of my many prep schools, before I got kicked out for being drunk and naked in the boys' locker room," Georgia told him. "I look at it sometimes, and yeah, I wonder what might have been. But it can't be, Bobby. I've got to move on, and deep down I know it."

"Yeah, I guess you'll get to be around all kinds of exciting people and events over there at sixteen hundred Pennsylvania," said Bob conversationally. "Nice cute little baby nephew you saw in that video, wasn't he? Maybe you'll get to be in the room when your fancy man Hunter Wallace gives the order launching the bombers and the missiles that will burn him alive with napalm in his crib."

"What?" asked Georgia, uncomprehending.

Bob turned to face her. "They're coming for us, Georgia. This time it's for real. A full-scale invasion of the Northwest Republic. B-52s and Tomahawk missiles and maybe nuclear weapons and anthrax."

"My God!" whispered Georgia.

"We figure sometime in June, but we may be wrong," Bob went on. "We don't know for sure, and we have to know. We have to know when they're coming, and how, and how many. There's only one man who has all that knowledge in his head. We have to know what he knows, and what he is thinking. That's why I'm here, Georgia. I am here to ask

you to go into the very belly of the beast and prostitute yourself, betray the man who's paying you, and maybe get caught and die with a poison needle in your arm, so that your little nephew and your father and your brother and his wife, and my wife and my two children, and Jenny and her children, and our whole country can have some kind of chance to fight these evil sons of bitches off and survive as free people with some kind of future besides the sewer I've seen all around me since I've come here. That's what I am asking you to do, so don't feel bad about yourself, because regardless of the reason, that makes me just as rotten as you. That also means I don't have any right to judge you, Georgia. I wouldn't anyway, because you're not responsible for what this filthy society made you into. You have a chance now to change what you are, when this is over and you Come Home, and you have a chance to make sure that Allura never goes through what you had to go through, but only if the Republic survives. I'm not just asking for your sake or mine, but for millions of free white people who are threatened with death and slavery, but I don't care why you do it. *Please,* Georgia!"

She was silent for a long time. "I don't know if I can," she finally whispered. "Bobby, thanks for listening to my little monologue just now, but I'm afraid you still don't get it. I'm fucked up, Bobby. My life, my head, my heart, my addictions, my whole life, everything about me is fucked up like a Chinese fire drill."

"Well, you just made a racial joke," he pointed out. "That shows your mind isn't completely under control, and that's a start."

"Do I get to go to some kind of spy school?" she asked. "I guess you must have done."

"I got a kind of crash course when they sent me Out Here, yes."

"That was a serious question," she responded. "What exactly will I have to do? How the hell am I supposed to be a spy, a real one? I don't even watch spy movies on TV or disc. I always thought they were boring and silly." She got up and went to a drawer in the glass-fronted liquor cabinet. She opened it and pulled out an old-fashioned Smith and Wesson .357 Magnum detective revolver, stainless steel and with a three-inch snub barrel and a black Pachmayr grip. "I have my own gun, but do I get a silencer with it?" she giggled. "I've never seen a silencer outside of a movie."

"You can't really silence a revolver too effectively," said Bob, taking it from her. "These older pieces are hard to silence to begin with, because unless the weapon is manufactured to take a specially fitted suppressor you have to thread the muzzle and screw it on to seal off the expanding gases from the cartridge, which is what makes the gun go bang. See the gap here between the cylinder and the barrel? Gas and powder ash from the round firing escapes out that way, and they still make a bang loud enough to be heard. Plus they cover your hands with GSR, gunshot residue, which can be detected by a forensic unit in about five seconds if they run a test on your hand, and they'll know you've fired a gun recently. You'd need an automatic that's been engineered to take a silencer. We've got a lot of those, but you won't be given one because there's no way you'd be able to get a gun into the White House past the metal detectors, the sniffer dogs, and the X-ray scanners."

"Cool, real spy stuff, huh?" said Georgia with a smile. "So you don't want me to blow the president and then blow him away?"

"No, we're not asking you to assassinate Hunter Wallace or anyone else, Georgia. We know you're not up for that. Neither are we asking you to steal or photograph any secret plans or classified documents, or plant any listening devices, or listen at keyholes. That's too dangerous. You'll be in an environment that's monitored twenty-four-seven from the Secret Service control room in the sub-basement, both audio and visual, and they'd pick up on any suspicious behavior right away. We're asking you to go in there and be the best, uh, personal services assistant you can be, stay on everybody's good side, keep your ears open, and report back to us and let us know what you hear and see. Everyone who meets with Wallace, some idea of what was discussed if you can give it to us, everything you can pick up from pillow talk or just overhear in the corridors and the ladies' room, White House gossip, anything to do with the security arrangements or protocol, what the general morale and mood is like, the whole nine yards. Every few days you will meet with me, or sometimes with one of two other people you will be introduced to. There will be a woman named Betsy who can help you out with the more intimate stuff if you want, and a guy we call the Zombie Master. Then we'll go over what you have seen and heard. You will be given some emergency phone codes and some numbers where you can text

or call out and let us know in code if anything major is happening, but you need to use those only in an urgent situation, because every call out of the White House is monitored and recorded."

"And if they catch me?" asked Georgia. "Will you guys stage a raid with SS commandos in ski masks and machine guns and rescue me?"

"No," he told her with brutal honesty. "There is no way we could raise the necessary muscle and intel to do anything like that, break into the White House or the National Security Facility in the FBI building where you would be taken. If you are detected, you will be arrested and charged with treason and espionage if they decide to do it in public, but most likely they won't. Most likely you will simply be taken to the cellars below the FBI building, where you will disappear. You will be interrogated, and if you don't break down and tell them everything immediately, they'll beat you first, a very scientific and precise beating that will break some of your non-essential bones and will hurt worse than anything you can imagine. If you still refuse to talk you will be tortured, the good old-fashioned waterboard if they have a weakness for the classics, then the Dershowitz needles. In the unlikely event you still won't break, they'll get creative. Maybe the electric chair, maybe dentists' drills, maybe a medieval device called the *strappado.* Don't ask. They had five years during the War of Independence to refine their techniques, and a lot of those interrogators are still working for DHS and the Bureau. The NVA used to ask captured Volunteers to hold out for only twenty-four hours to give them the time to break down and move anything and anyone the captured individual could betray. Nobody was expected to hold out longer than that, although some like Cathy Frost did, to their eternal honor and the glory of our nation. We don't expect you to hold out that long. I understand that you will betray me, and if I don't get a chance to say so later on, I will forgive you with all my heart and implore your own forgiveness for doing this to you. On my part, I think I can give our guys their twenty-four hours, but we'll see how that plays out. Afterwards we will both be executed, probably in secret. Your mom and Allura will never know what happened to you, although they may guess."

"Wow," said Georgia, shaking her head. "That's quite a sales pitch! How can I resist?"

"Would you rather I lied to you?"

"No." She looked up at him. "And if it works? If we can somehow stop Hunter Wallace from launching a war against the Republic, or win it if he does?"

"Then that little boy you saw on the screen just now will grow up among his own kind, in a free land. So will Allura. When we think it's time and you've done all you can, I will take you both home to Montana, and there won't be any more bad dreams." Bob picked up the revolver and broke open the cylinder; he saw one single round inside. "And you will be able to find something better to do with your time than playing Russian roulette." He pressed the extractor pin and dropped the cartridge into his palm, then stuck it in his pocket. "I'll hang on to this. I suppose I should hang on to the whole weapon to make sure you don't do something stupid, but one of the fundamental principles of the Republic is the right to bear arms, and nobody has the authority to abridge that right. It's one of the things that makes us different from them. It's who we are."

"I don't do it a lot," she protested feebly. "Just sometimes when I'm really high or drunk."

"You shouldn't be doing it at all, and I ought to slap you silly for even thinking about it," he told her. "But I suppose that really would be poor salesmanship. I don't expect you to say yes right away, Georgia. Take some time to think about it, but do me a favor? Lay off the weed and the booze for one night while you do. A decision like this needs a clear head."

"No need," she said. "I'll do it."

"That was quick," said Bob, startled. "You sure?"

"It's the same game I play with that gun, only in a much bigger league," said Georgia. "Bobby, some nights I look at that poem over there on the wall for a long time, and I want to put all six bullets in that piece. Or take a few too many pills, so the sailor really can come home from the sea, and the hunter home from the hill. If it weren't for Allura I probably would have. I just don't want her to grow up thinking I abandoned her, and I don't want to leave her to Amber and Marvin to raise, because I know what she'll turn out to be like. But I want my life to end, Bobby, one way or another. I can't stand it anymore. I've

had enough. I want this life to be over, either because it's really ended in death, or because I somehow start over from scratch. America won't let me do that."

"Why didn't you say to hell with it and just Come Home before this?" asked Bob curiously. "Thousands of people do, every year. They find some way to Come Home legally or else they run the McCurtain, but with all the money you've had access to, you could have bribed your way into a tourist permit or something like that. A lot of people do it that way."

"Yeah, well, the Office of Northwest Recovery issues those permits, and they've gotten wise to that," said Georgia. "They wouldn't have let me take Allura, and neither would Amber and Marvin. They would have read that one like a book. And I won't lie to you, it all just seemed so hopeless, so . . . I didn't learn much in school, but one passage from Shakespeare stuck in my mind:

"How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
'Tis an unweeded garden that grows to seed;
Things rank and gross in nature possess it merely."

"*Hamlet*," said Bob, recognizing the lines.

"Yeah," said Georgia. "I don't know why I remember it. I must have been straight that day in class, for once. But that's pretty much how I felt. I thought about snatching Allura and heading Northwest and smashing through the McCurtain, but it was just a fantasy. Just too lazy or too ground down. I could never imagine actually trying it."

"That's how my wife and her family got Home," said Bob. "It was about the same time Amber snatched you. It's ironic. You and Millie both had the same experience in a way, only in reverse. But her family didn't sleep in any Sheratons or Holiday Inns along the road. When this is over and you're Home, you'll meet her and you can compare notes."

"Okay, so tell me exactly how I get to become a spy?" demanded Georgia briskly.

"The first thing you're going to have to do is adopt the old NVA General Order Number Ten," said Bob sternly. "The booze and the grass and the pills have to go, Georgia. That worries me. You're not just risking your own life now when you get high, now you're risking mine and Kevin Junior's. You'll have to do it cold turkey, too. No rehab. No expensive spas and counseling and therapy. You're going to have to just *stop*, because your will is stronger than the chemicals. Can you do it, Georgia? Can you beat that stuff?"

"I think so," she said. "Because now, for the first time in my life, I have something better to do."

* * *

The next day Bob/Richie and Vincent Cardinale met with Doctor Jake Shapira, aka the Zombie Master, in his carpeted and mahogany-paneled office in the Watergate complex. Shapira was a real psychiatrist running a high-end D.C. practice under a false Jewish name. The degrees on his wall from Hofstra and Johns Hopkins Universities more or less replicated his actual qualifications, and they would check out impeccably in the face of any inquiry. An entire background history and public record had been constructed by the WPB computer hacking team for "Jacob Shapira," down to grade school records from New York and video clips from his eighth birthday party on his personal web site. All of his records were verifiable and cross-referenced; if anyone looked in the online versions of the Brooklyn telephone directory from forty years before or his college yearbooks, they would find him. The actual printed yearbook or telephone directory would show a discrepancy, but no one ever bothered to hunt up original paper documents anymore. It entailed too much effort. In his own way, Doctor Jake Shapira was as real as Winston Smith's "Comrade Ogilvie" from *1984*. The Surveillance State had a lot of gaping holes in it.

"I've been able to wrangle approval from the White House to take on Ms. Myers as a patient," said the Zombie Master, a dapper little man in his late forties. "It's standard operating procedure with the president's personal services assistants to have them in government-approved therapy for the duration of their contracts anyway. She's

already had a lifetime of therapists as it is, and I can glom their records, which will give me a good overview of her. Ironically, I'll be reporting on her both to the Secret Service and the Office."

"Why do they call you the Zombie Master?" asked Bob curiously.

"Behold my book of magic spells," said the psychiatrist, waving his prescription pad in the air. "I use it to turn a lot of the most powerful people in Washington D.C., into zombies. My patient list includes some of the most influential people in America: Congressional leaders from both sides of the aisle, senior civil servants and policy makers, top Pentagon brass, a couple of Supreme Court justices and a lot of federal judges, scads of FBI agents and lesser fry, business leaders, media people, and of course all their spouses and kiddies. I listen to their moronic problems, nod and tut sympathetically, tell them they are way too overworked and underappreciated, then I put them on a variety of medication cocktails that affect their judgment and thought processes in the long run. Nothing obvious, nothing that will send them into a psychotic break and make them go berserk with a Ginsu knife in Trader Vic's or anything like that, just enough to render their thinking fuzzy, induce short-term memory lapses and impede the parts of the brain dealing with creative and deductive reasoning. A slight dose of artificially induced Alzheimer's. I don't drive them crazy, just make them a little more stupid than most of them already are. Plus there's the incredible mine of information they provide for the Office."

"We're bringing in the doc here for two reasons," said Cardinale. "First, he's a real shrink and he needs to keep a close eye on Belladonna, and make sure she stays off the booze and the dope, and doesn't go bonkers under the pressure, which is gonna be heavy."

"Yeah, heavier than anything she's ever undergone in her life," said Bob. "I admit, I'm worried. She seems to be committed to it now, but that's just based on one meeting, and I have no way of knowing what happened after I left. She's damned unstable. She may have poured a bottle of vodka down her throat and lit up a joint the minute I was out the door, or she may already have gotten the heebie-jeebies and called the FBI on me."

"That's why we don't introduce her to the Doc here until she's been inside Sixteen Hundred for a few weeks and we see how she's holding up," said Cardinale. "He's an asset we can't place at risk unless we're a little more confident in her than we are now. If she can make it on her own for a bit, he'll step in and keep her head tuned up, although you're the primary and you'll always have to bear the brunt of that. But the second reason we need her coming here to this office is, well, this office."

"Eh?" asked Bob.

"You are now sitting in one of the few places in Washington, D.C., that is truly clean, in the electronic surveillance sense," said the Zombie Master. "Doctor-patient confidentiality went out the window in so-called national security and terrorism cases many years ago, of course—the DHS and FBI can simply walk into a doctor's office and take whatever records they want if a U.S. Attorney says it's terrorism-related—and the bugging of psychiatrists' offices and consulting rooms is now common practice, one DHS doesn't bother to conceal much anymore. But my patient list is so high-powered that a couple of years ago, when I found a DHS bug in here, I was able to raise such unholy hell about it through my patients who didn't want their secret quirks and perversions on any government databases, that they backed off and granted me an official waiver, which so far they seem to have honored. Vince and one of his tech wizards do regular comprehensive sweeps just to make sure, but we can use Georgia's weekly meetings here in this office to do her de-briefings free of any eavesdropping by unfriendlies."

"Nowhere else is safe," agreed Cardinale. "Not a restaurant or a chew-easy, not a park, not a church, not the Lincoln Memorial, no place. They've got directional mics in the parks that can hear a squirrel fart. At first you alone, then you and Betsy, and finally you and the living dead guy here, will have to debrief her as completely as you can, wring every drop of information out of her like she was a wet rag, then write up a summary and give it to me for encoding, encryption, and transmission back to our friend from Down Under back in Olympia. Plus you'll have to hold her hand, calm her jitters, soothe her disgust at some of the things she'll be doing, pep up her morale, keep her on the

straight and narrow and send her back into that pervert's bed bright-eyed and bushy tailed. And you'll have to do it all in an hour."

"Fifty-five minutes," said the Zombie Master.

"Under an hour, then," said Cardinale. "We have to assume that Belladonna will be under a lot of electronic surveillance and at least intermittent close surveillance by FBI and Secret Service agents. It's like she'll always be on stage, so every minute of her time has to be accounted for. We've diddled with the Watergate cameras a bit, and we have laid out a special route for you to use whereby you can enter the building by a back way, unseen. That's when you're doing the debriefings here, which won't be for the first couple of weeks. During that preliminary time, you have to meet with her alone. As part of her contract, she had to agree to the DHS putting fiber-optic minicams everywhere in her apartment except for the bathroom, which fortunately is taking place today and not yesterday. Damn, we were lucky she called in for her smokes when she did! Otherwise, it would have been impossible for you to contact her without showing up on their digital. Since we can't figure out any way to get you into and out of the un-bugged bathroom in her place without being spotted, we need to figure out some way for you to get her alone before you start bringing her here."

"I can make deliveries as Richie the buttlegger, like I did yesterday, but I can't see any excuse for Richie to hang around after he hands over the smokes and takes her money," said Bob.

"I'd like to keep you completely off their digital if possible," said Cardinale. "While she's doing the Doughboy she's going to be watched like a hawk, and anybody who comes near her gets a file opened up on him. Your *persona* as Richie Carroll will hold up to any ordinary online check, but still, we don't want them looking too close at you, or looking at you at all if it can be helped. I think what we'll have to do is have you meet in certain restaurants and bars and parks, like in the old Cold War days, but arrange for the surveillance to be interdicted long enough for you to debrief. Happens all the time; these systems are as highly strung as race horses and they're always breaking down, especially since most of the maintenance people these days are incompetent Third Worlders. I think one or two mysterious camera outages as Belladonna is walking down the street wouldn't be overly suspicious, but we can't do it too

often. You made sure she has the burner number and the substitution code?"

"I drilled them into her before I left," said Bob. "She's not dumb and I'm sure she's got it. I text her an innocuous code word, she calls me on the disposable and false-FLECed cell, I give her the coordinates for a corner in the city which she then decodes in her mind, and we meet there in either an hour or half an hour depending on her situation."

"Okay, on Tuesday morning, after her first night of presidential passion, we'll get you two together at a taqueria I know on Constitution," said Cardinale. "Duke and I will work out a camera disruption sequence that will look natural, like a rat chewed through a cable or something. We'll try to give you an hour of down time. You'll need it. This is going to be the morning after her first Hail to the Chief, and from what I gather of that son of a bitch's bedside manner, she may be pretty shaken."

"I can imagine," said Bob.

"That's the problem," said Cardinale grimly. "You won't have to imagine. She'll probably tell you."

The intercom buzzed on Shapira's desk. "That's my next patient. Bagwell, the Secretary of Defense. By the way, Vin, I'm working on something with him. He's undergoing hypnosis therapy for transvestite and other deviant urges, and I'm carefully planting post-hypnotic suggestions in his mind. I think it's possible that when the shit does hit the fan, and I say a special trigger word to him, I can turn him into a chicken."

The meeting on Tuesday went off without a hitch. It was a fine spring day, and Georgia looked breathtaking in a golden yellow Easter dress and broad hat. All she did was shrug. "Yeah, he's a freak," she told Bob. "But I've done worse."

* * *

Two days later and three thousand miles away on the opposite coast, in Olympia, the intercom on President Henry Morehouse's desk buzzed. It was Annette Sellars, his personal secretary. "Yes, Annette?"

"Mister President, General Barrow is here to see you."

"He's my three o'clock. Why is he early?" asked Morehouse.

"He says it's important," said Annette.

"He knows where the door is," said Morehouse. The door opened and the Security Minister came in, grinning. "I hope that cheery mug denotes good news, Frank," said the president. "We could use some."

Barrow slapped a file down on Morehouse's desk in front of him. "Damned good news! Charlie Randall just sent this over. First NAR humintel report ever from inside the White House! Operation Belladonna is up and running. She's in, Red! *We got her in!"*

XI

The Carrion Crows

(Twelve years and seven months after Longview)

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!
What is't you do?
—Macbeth—Act IV, Scene 1

On a warm spring day in May, with the D.C. cherry blossoms in full bloom outdoors along the Potomac and the Ellipse, the United States executive and military command team for Operation Strikeout assembled in the Situation Room in the White House for a progress briefing on how they would restore truth, justice, and the American way to the Mordor of evil that was the Northwest Republic.

No corner of the White House with the exception of the Oval Office itself starred in more movies and television shows than the Situation Room, the presidential decision center under the main floor of the West Wing. Hollywood imagines the situation room as a beehive of activity, where grim and dignified presidents command covert operations around the world. In reality, it was something of a high-tech dungeon full of scurrying rats. The main situation room had six huge flat-screen televisions mounted on the walls for secure video conferences, satellite-linked through state-of-the-art technology to generals and prime ministers around the globe. White House technologists settled on NEC plasma flat-screens for the president's main conference room and LCD screens in the remainder of the chamber. The main room had less mahogany and more 21st century whisper wall than the private conference room, which is where today's meeting was taking place. There were five secure video rooms and a direct, secure feed to Air

Force One. In the main room, the watch officers from every branch of the service were arrayed on two curved tiers of computer terminals that could be fed both classified and unclassified data from around the country and the world. While Secret Service agents or uniformed Protective Service officers always confiscated cellular phones and two-way pagers that could serve as bugging devices, the situation room left nothing to chance. It had sensors embedded in the ceilings that could pick up cellular signals and alert the guards if anyone was attempting to transmit anything from the room.

Operation Strikeout was D-minus forty-some-odd days and counting now, and they hadn't even decided on the final date for the attack yet. Withholding that crucial detail even from his own troops was the Commander-in-Chief's own idea. He thought it was brilliant. He called it "tactical flexibility"; the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and all of the other field grade officers in the military called it moronic and indicative of how little Hunter Wallace understood about the logistic realities involved in moving huge numbers of troops and vehicles and massive amounts of materièl around out in the real world. They called it "the damned Doughboy playing soldier," although not where the DHS's listening devices could overhear them.

Of course, it was not unheard-of in military history to plan major operations within a loose window of a few days or even weeks, but there were way too many other loose ends, half-assed aspects, slipshod logistics and vagaries about Strikeout that bothered the brass. The generals attempted without success to explain to the president that there was a difference between flexibility and sloppiness. One Air Force three-star said, "I understand the Northmen require in their Constitution that their president be a military veteran. Now we know why." He made that remark in the bar of the Pentagon officers' mess after his third martini, and it was picked up on a hidden microphone. The three-star was now a lowly private waiting in a cell in Fort Belvoir for his secret military tribunal. Most likely, he wouldn't get the needle, but a trip to a penal coalmine in Pennsylvania was probably in his future, *pour encourager les autres*.

This core group meeting today in the Situation Room consisted first and foremost of U.S. President Hunter Wallace himself. The Doughboy

was a pallid, lumpish, middle-aged man with hair so blond as to be almost white, and eyes that were technically blue, but in reality so pale as to be nearly colorless. It was as if nature had started to make an albino, and then changed her mind.

Wallace was always nattily well-dressed in carefully tailored clothing, everything from formal tuxes to crisp and gleaming tennis whites as the occasion demanded, and his hair received a thousand-dollar coiffure every other day from a stylist employed by the White House for the sole purpose of maintaining presidential spiffiness. He could not, in all honesty, be called fat. That was a tribute to a delegated White House dietician whose sole function it was to ensure that nothing that was not green, leafy, crunchy, or all three passed his lips or was even present at his table; the White House waiters were instructed to keep sweets physically out of his reach at all times during state dinners. Of course, meat was illegal these days in America, a prohibition no more honored in the White House kitchen than anywhere else. The Jewish staff all kept personal stashes of burgers, brisket, chicken and unlawful pizza toppings in the kitchen refrigerators that they gave or sold to their fellow employees, but the word had been laid down long ago by presidential Press Secretary and minder Angela Herrin: if President Wallace got hold of so much as a single slice of pepperoni, someone's job was out the window. Wallace underwent a strict regimen of workouts in the White House gym supervised by a personal trainer who was authorized to literally drag him out of meetings if necessary, and make sure he got in an hour a day on the treadmill and swam fifty laps in the pool minimum, thereby maintaining an acceptable photogenic minimum of lean body mass, muscle tone, and definition in his limbs.

Yet one could somehow tell by looking at him that Hunter Wallace's body yearned achingly to go to seed. He was one of those people who'd been struggling with a weight problem all his life, and was only barely staying on top of it through grueling, frantic exercise combined with a near starvation diet of rabbit food. One got the impression that if Wallace so much as *looked* at a slice of cheesecake his waist size would go up an inch, and if he ever slipped up and ate a single Danish pastry or bowl of ice cream, he would blow up into a blimp and burst the buttons on his Armani suit jacket. Even so inveterate a Wallace-hater as Vinnie

Skins found it difficult not to sympathize a little. After reviewing one intelligence report he commented, "That Jew bitch don't let the poor bastard eat nothing but broccoli and carrot juice. Plus he ain't got no balls. No wonder he's fucked up in the head!"

The Vice President of the United States was Hugh Jenner, a lean and acerbic former Senator from Oregon in his sixties who did his daily laps and handball sessions not out of sheer necessity like the president, but because he enjoyed exercise and a healthy lifestyle. Jenner was a former insurance executive and investment banker from Portland who had considered Northwest Finance Minister Ray Ridgeway to be a business rival before the War of Independence, and who now loathed him to the point of madness. Needless to say, Jenner had spent the entire past twelve years bellowing at the top of his lungs for something along the line of Operation Strikeout in order to recover his state, as well as his 35-room mansion on Skyline Boulevard in Portland. The mansion had been destroyed by shellfire during the Battle of Portland, and the Republic had built a local clinic on the site staffed by pediatric nurses, paramedics, and nurse practitioners from the National Medical Service. Jenner's dream ever since had been to tear down the clinic and rebuild his former home down to the last detail.

Hugh Jenner's Northwest origins had been his ticket onto the ticket, so to speak, at the last combined convention where Democrats and Republicans had met under the auspices of One Nation Indivisible to sort out the ONI Bipartisan Unity Nomination which effectively meant the presidency, although the formality of running a November election against a few minor third and fourth party candidates and eccentric billionaire independents was always scrupulously observed. When Hunter Wallace had raised Jenner's hand beside him at the cheering convention he had said, "Hugh, I promise you that the next time this convention meets, you will be watching it from your own living room in Portland!" This set off a brief flurry of punditory speculation from the cable news talking heads as to what exactly Wallace meant by the remark, before a few phone calls from the ONI National Committee and a few heavy-handed FBI visits caused the pundits to find other things to talk about.

The other attendees at today's briefing were bureaucratic as opposed to electoral products of the American system of government as it had come to be. Marlon Bagwell, the Secretary of Defense who was also the Zombie Master's patient, was a large and overweight man with a seamed boozer's face and four decades in Congress, the federal bureaucracy, and the private sector under his well-stretched belt. He was one of those uniquely American polymaths and political chameleons who moved effortlessly between boardroom, government office and media studio. Bagwell's face just kept popping up everywhere on screens for years until everybody knew him: a cable talk show here, a Congressional hearing there, an ambassadorship to London and an energy consortium chairmanship in Houston, a media interview on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange on his recent appointment to head up the latest neo-conservative or sometimes liberal think tank in D.C. But Bagwell was not just a yes-man to the people in power: he was a fixer, an able sergeant major who, once he picked his general of the moment, could get things done for him. He was the ideal man to provide civilian oversight of the reconquest of the Northwest. He was able, efficient, and as far as anyone knew, Marlon Bagwell had never in his life entertained anything remotely resembling a political or moral principle.

White House press secretary Angela Herrin and White House chief of staff Ronald Schiff were the two acknowledged *Hofjüden* at the presidential court, but the situation with them was more complex than it first appeared. In theory, the chief of staff was a much more powerful office than that of press secretary, but appearances were deceiving. Of the two, the raven-haired and statuesque Angela Herrin was actually the primary contact and conduit between the U.S. government and world Jewry, in whose hands was still concentrated such massive wealth that while the loss of the state of Israel was a crushing blow to Jewish morale, in the practical sense it was little more than a blip on the Tribe's total balance sheet. She was 35 years old, born Angela Herrnstein on a kibbutz outside Herzliya, and a lifelong Mossad agent who didn't admit to being Jewish at all. She had a fake Episcopalian background and past life every bit as mendacious and every bit as well documented as the Zombie Master's, except courtesy of a different crew of crack computer hackers. It was not true that it was impossible to hide or keep any secrets

in Hunter Wallace's Surveillance State; you just had to be tech-savvy and well-connected to do it.

Angela kept a low profile outside her White House press briefings; her Lincoln Town Car was armored and bomb-proofed but very discreet, and she relied on her burly Israeli-born Secret Service agent and chauffeur Motti as her lone bodyguard. Motti lived in a garret over her fortified and high-security brownstone in the discreet neighborhood of Brookland, occasionally going downstairs to the master bedroom either to sleep in the king-sized bed with his boss, or to remove other unwanted male bodies from that bed, sometimes alive and sometimes dead. Angela's sexual tastes were straight enough, but tended even more toward the bizarre than Hunter Wallace's.

Ronald Schiff, the paunchy and balding White House Chief of Staff, was openly Jewish down to his Yiddish accent and the knitted blue *kipa* on his nut. He not only provided the administration's necessary public genuflection to the Tribe's power, but also acted as more or less a decoy to turn attention away from Angela Herrin, who so far as most people knew was the Barbie Doll spokesperson for the administration wielding only the power and influence of a press secretary, and supposedly was nowhere near the decision-making process. They all hoped (in vain) that this arrangement was able to fool foreign intelligence agencies, especially the Northwest War Prevention Bureau.

Schiff was aware of the fact that part of his function was to draw hostile fire away from Angela in the sense of media attention and Congressional political scrutiny as well as bullets and explosives, and it made him paranoid. He always traveled with an entourage of Secret Service bodyguards second only to the president's, and he resented Angela mightily for the inconvenience. In public Schiff was cool, calm, witty and supercilious, earning himself the media nickname of the "Iron Chancellor" in a fawning Bismarckian reference. In reality he never quite pulled it off; he actually came across as a little ridiculous. Schiff tried to be Henry Kissinger but only made it as far as Jackie Mason. In private, he was a bundle of nerves and neuroses, apprehensive about maintaining his position, and terrified of Muslim and Northwest assassins under his bed. The Zombie Master had been carefully angling and trying to get Schiff onto his couch as a patient for some years, but

without any luck. Schiff's own father had been a psychiatrist, and so Schiff hated the breed. He preferred to spill his guts to $50,000-per-night hookers in expensive hotel rooms. A number of these sessions the WPB station had been able to bug in advance, thanks to Betsy's contacts among the capitol's high-end professional women. It had been from one such late night *intíme* that the Circus had first heard the name Operation Strikeout, and realized its significance.

Admiral Hector Brava, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was a lean and sour-faced Annapolis graduate with a salt and pepper moustache. A white man with a Hispanic name, he had traded on it to get into Annapolis and to some degree in order to gain promotion during his early years. It bothered and shamed him that he had done so, because unlike many people at the top of the American shitheap, Brava was actually half-way competent, both as a sailor and as a military tactician. Significantly, he was the only member of the inner circle besides the Oregonian, Vice President Jenner, who had any reservations about Operation Strikeout. Not about the actual idea of invading the Republic itself, but concerns about the increasingly slipshod way in which it was being done.

The same could not be said of Secretary of State David "Gator" Modlin. Modlin was a pipsqueak, a little man with watery eyes, a weak chin, and football moustache comprising eleven hairs on each side. He had never actually served in the military himself. No one quite knew how such an ineffectual individual had ever gained the nickname of "Gator." In fact, Modlin had bestowed it on himself, and regularly paid media people under the counter to use it. He was a total political timeserver who had slithered his way to the top, because he had never found a single moneyed and politically powerful ass so rotten or so odoriferous that he would not apply his lips to it. Modlin bullied and hectored his subordinates, firing and transferring them for no reason other than the fact that they irritated him in some way, while at the same time he groveled to the president and anyone who might be in a position to hurt or help him.

Secretary of Northwest Recovery Janet Chalupiak was a six-foot-two, 280-pound lesbian with a face like a buffalo, and burning eyes, which gave away the fact that she was very nearly insane. In her

youth, before the War of Independence, she had been a student at the University of Montana. There she and the late Linda Barnard, not yet a full professor, had conducted a lengthy liaison. The two of them had scratched each other's backs by each filing sexual discrimination and harassment lawsuits against White male faculty members whom the other viewed as standing in their way. Both men were stripped of tenure and their lives and careers ruined, and one of them committed suicide when his wife left him. Linda moved up and got the dead man's tenure. Janet received a poke full of cash from the university's settlement, a brilliant academic record and a job recommendation to the Justice Department that got the lesbian lass the hell out of Red Lodge, and she had never looked back.

The whole experience had been deliciously empowering, and when Janet heard in the months after Longview that Linda had been hanged by Force 101, it sent her into a frenzy of hatred and lust for revenge against everything in the world that was white, male, heterosexual and thereby evil. It was Janet Chalupiak who had begun a program of selected assassinations within the Northwest Republic several years before. ONR agents had conducted a short campaign of shooting, sniping, and car-bomb attacks in the name of a non-existent group called "Northwest Rainbow," allegedly seeking reunification with the United States. Several county sheriffs, judges, and Party officials had been murdered as well as some of their family members. BOSS and the Civil Guard's CID quickly tracked down and eliminated the terrorists, with the help of an enraged and alert populace who left the ONR ops no place to run or hide. Then it was the Republic's turn. ONR's excursion into assassination provoked such severe retaliation from Olympia, including a car bomb that killed a Commerce Secretary and Janet's own deputy director, who had been found garroted in her home, that she had been ordered by the president and the rest of the cabinet to stop before things got out of hand. Now nursing a sense of grievance against the administration she felt had failed to have her back in her personal vendetta against the Northwest Republic, Janet Chalupiak was the most impassioned backer of Operation Strikeout.

Rounding off the team was the obligatory Strong Black Woman, one specimen of whom had become a traditional feature of every

administration since Condoleezza Rice. It was customary to give each "Condi" a big office in the West Wing and pile her desk up with huge stacks of reports on iron ore production in Outer Mongolia, or Pentagon war game scenarios involving an Italian blockade of the Faroe Islands, so forth and so on. Usually the SBW would spend a few weeks trying to wade through it all and pretending that she had a clue, then she would get the message and leave her office and the mountain of crap on her desk gathering dust, while she hit the talk shows and cocktail parties, the state dinners and photo-op circuit for the rest of the administration. Meanwhile the faceless white drudges in the pastel shirts and ties who actually had some idea of what they were doing handled all the actual policy wonk stuff.

But Kanesha Knight had seen *Foxy Brown* over 30 times as a little girl, so she wanted to be a spy. In exchange for keeping the Black Congressional Congress in line for ONI for some years, when her turn came to be Condi she demanded and got the job of director of the CIA. Always overrated as an intelligence agency from the very time of its equally overrated OSS origins, the once famed Company had by now been almost entirely supplanted in the foreign humintel field by other agencies or what were euphemistically known as "subcontracting non-governmental organizations," i.e. mercenaries who were paid piecework rates for hard results and who were therefore incentivized to do some actual spying and get the real scoop. The CIA did nothing much anymore these days except collate these mercenaries' data and perform satellite photo analysis; the actual heavy lifting of spying on the Northwest Republic was done by the Office of Northwest Recovery, some military analysts, some NGOs and also by a few free agents, some of them kooky Christian Zionist "volunteers" who actually served something of a purpose, since they wasted more of BOSS's time than all the other actual spying combined.

So Kanesha had been given the CIA, providing a standard affirmative action two-fer, black skin and tits, and thus the ritual proof of Hunter Wallace's love of diversity and the Gorgeous Mosaic. At first, she had done little harm, but then Kanesha accidentally found out about Operation Strikeout and the command conferences and she wanted in, having a vague notion that invading somewhere was something

the CIA needed to be involved in. She threatened to file a sexual and racial discrimination lawsuit against the administration if she were not included in the strategy meetings.

This forced the administration to a hasty decision as to whether to admit Kanesha to the Situation Room and risk her blabbing off at the bubble lips, or have her assassinated in order to make sure the secrecy of Strikeout was not compromised. After some nattering with Angela Herrin, Ronald Schiff, and Janet Chalupiak, Hunter Wallace decided to kill two birds with one stone, so to speak. He would include Kanesha in the planning phase, and give her some make-work to do. He would go behind her back and retain some properly instructed and remunerated CIA personnel over at Langley to keep an eye on her and make sure she didn't totally blow the gaff on Operation Strikeout. Then about three weeks before the invasion, Wallace would have Kanesha whacked by the special duty detail of Secret Servicemen that American presidents traditionally used for such janitorial work since the Vince Foster episode back in the 90s. Wallace's hit squad was headed by his own personal bodyguard, the formidable former Detroit linebacker, Jimbo Hadding. Kanesha's assassination would of course be laid to the door of the dreaded WPB as part of the ongoing low-level grab-assing between the two nations' agencies that had recently escalated, thanks to Janet Chalupiak. Her death would become the official excuse for the very invasion itself.

So the rest of the inner Strikeout circle, who were all in on the secret of her coming demise, put up with Kanesha Knight's presence at the meetings, dressed to the nines and reeking of the perfume she apparently sloshed over her body by the quart. They listened to her endless babble on a variety of topics of which she had no understanding at all, secure in the knowledge that they wouldn't have to put up with her for too much longer.

It was difficult for them to refrain from laughing, though, when she went on about the aliens. About a year before, some humorist in the WPB's black ops branch in Olympia had worked up a project wherein the CIA was carefully fed a line of disinformation through foreign sources regarding Project Bluelight, Doctor Joseph Cord's plasma anti-aircraft weapon, which was then just going into the prototype

stage. The Circus knew that the CIA knew about the project, they just weren't sure what it was. The disinformation was to the effect that after Longview the NDF had captured a secret U.S. government installation in Wyoming which housed remains of wrecked UFOs and laboratories where scientists were trying to reverse engineer the extraterrestrial technology, and that the plasma weapons were the result of this technology. The wicked white scientists had of course defected to the Republic, recycling the old Operation Paperclip liberal narrative, and they had now possibly succeeded in putting the horrible Nazi regime in Olympia into contact with the aliens who had originally visited earth in the UFOs. Therefore, it would not be a good idea for the United States to attack the Northwest Republic, because a flying saucer might appear over the White House and blow it up.

The WPB's analyst had intended for this rumor to be a "glow-worm," in intelligence parlance a deliberately created canard or red herring serving two purposes, to sow confusion and misdirection, and also to track and see where it went, how far and how fast, and where it eventually turned up. But Kanesha Knight had been reading supermarket tabloids since she was a child, she was an absolute believer in UFOs, and she was now expending a good deal of the resources of the CIA on trying to identify where the secret base with the alien technology had been and what it might have contained. The CIA analysts she had assigned to the job quickly figured out that the boss had been gulled by the WPB, but since no one dared to tell her and risk loss of career, they spent their days in their cubicles playing computer games or day-trading on the stock market, and writing up bogus reports based on internet UFO web sites.

"Can we at least set the date, Mister President?" asked Admiral Brava. "I vote for June 21st, the longest day of the year. We might as well give our boys the maximum amount of daylight to fight by."

"Joshua prayed to the Lord and stopped the sun in the sky, so the Children of Israel could keep on fighting," said Kanesha Knight, her exquisite enunciation reflecting the common negroid misconception that pronouncing clearly was the same as speaking intelligently.

"I'm sorry, ma'am, could you refresh my memory? What army group is Joshua commanding again?" asked Vice President Jenner politely.

"I'm holding off on that until the last minute," said President Wallace with gravity. "No one can betray what even I don't know." While this was clearly true, Wallace made it sound profound. From his early days as a Cognitive Dissonance blogger, Hunter Wallace had mastered the art of speaking and writing deeply, profoundly, and impressively, while saying nothing. He could and often did write a two-thousand word article or make an hour-long speech that imparted not one single idea or piece of information, and yet he made it *sound* so good that it was hours before his audience realized they'd been stroked, and many of them never did—enough to keep voting him into office, at any rate. It was his greatest asset, one that every politician in a democracy must hone to razor sharpness: the art of baffling with bullshit where he could not dazzle with brilliance.

"Can we assume June 21st as a ballpark date, Mister President?" persisted Brava wearily. "A guesstimate? A definite maybe?"

"Perhaps," said Hunter Wallace with an enigmatic smile. Brava gave up; they'd had this discussion many times before and by now it was almost routine, like the opening gambit of a chess match. The point of the running game for Brava, Jenner, and Chalupiak was to pry as much information and possibly even a decision or two out of President Wallace without landing themselves too deeply in the excremental matter. The trick was to offer him credible deniability so that if anything Wallace "suggested" went wrong, it would be officially someone else's idea. The problem was that electronic audio-visual minutes were being kept off the videocam at one end of the table, and it was a lot harder to wiggle out of something once it is recorded for all time as having been spoken, than it was back in the days of simple written minutes.

Now Jenner gave Brava a subtle nod. "Mister President," said Brava, "I would like to re-visit the question of a fourth front along the northern part of the I-Five corridor. There is still time to transfer at least two strategic bomber wings to Elmendorf AFB in Anchorage, and send at least ten mechanized brigades and six or seven infantry brigades to Fort Greely and Fort Wainwright. The troops can then move quietly down to the border so they can launch a co-ordinated fourth prong down through British Columbia and over into the Repub—I mean, the racist entity, at Bellingham. Then they drive right on to Seattle

and Olympia. It will be midsummer, and the weather in Alaska will be perfect for a move like that. The Canadian government has already given its permission for us to use their territory as a springboard for the invasion. What could be the problem with getting them on board for an additional maneuver like this?"

"Well, let's go over it again, since apparently you weren't listening the first four or five times," said Wallace irritably. "You're a military man, Admiral Brava, and presumably you know how to read a map. I suggest you look at one of the Puget Sound area, where you will notice something interesting. The city of Vancouver, Canada, is practically right on top of enemy territory, as North American distances go. A man with an especially powerful bladder and a good wind behind him can piss in Seattle and hit downtown Vancouver. It is so close that the Nazi intelligence school on Whidbey Island occasionally takes trainees out on live infiltration exercises to Victoria and Vancouver, much to the disgust of those clowns at CSIS and the RCMP, who have yet to catch a single one of them. They're tired of getting theater ticket and valet parking stubs from Nanaimo and Surrey showing up on their desks with Whidbey Island postmarks, especially since there is no legal mail service between Canada and the racist entity, and neither force has any idea who's getting into their office to hand-deliver the letters. But to return to the subject, our racist buddies have a little something called the V-Three rocket. It's actually more of a rocket-boosted glider. It's very low-tech, doesn't even have an onboard guidance system . . ."

"Which means there is nothing we can jam, so we either shoot them down or they deliver their payload," said Brava. "Yes, sir, I am familiar with the V-Three. They are slow compared to a Cruise missile, but four hundred and fifty miles per hour on launch and approximately the same speed coming in after burnout is still hard to hit without a high-tech defense system or a jet fighter. You can't shoot one of the damned things down with small arms. They are comparatively cheap to manufacture, and our satellite and ground reports indicate that the NAR . . ."

"The racist homophobic entity!" shrieked Janet Chalupiak. "There is no Republic of anything up there, and if you say that it sounds like you're talking about a real country!"

"All right, let's revert back to the *modus vivendi* we reached the last time, and just call it the Emerald City," said Brava wearily.

"Fair enough," said Hunter Wallace magnanimously. "The Emerald City and its band of naughty munchkins are manufacturing more of these V-Threes even as we speak. They've gone on a V-Three spree, see?" He giggled. "These weapons are capable of lifting a thousand-kilogram payload. That's two thousand two hundred pounds, slightly over a ton, and that's a lot of anthrax, a lot of phosgene or mustard gas, or a lot of just plain high explosive. They have a range of over four hundred miles, depending on the wind, but that means that from their firing platforms in southern Oregon they can hit San Francisco and Sacramento with no trouble."

"They have no accuracy at all. They can't even be aimed properly," sniffed Dave "Gator" Modlin.

"No, they can't," agreed Hunter Wallace. "But they can hit something the size of a city, somewhere in town. Just a ton of bad shit, disease or explosive or incendiary white phosphorus, dropping randomly out of the sky. In a way, that's a more effective terror weapon than a smart bomb or guided missile that one can avoid by staying away from obvious targets. The Nazis don't call them Flying Bombs for nothing. Now, with a range of over four hundred miles, let us ask ourselves, where *else* can these flying murder machines hit with total ease? And the prize goes to—*Vancouver, Canada!* Yes, Vancouver, home of the largest Chinese and other Asian population on the North American continent. Millions of helpless victims for genocidal racist monsters to slaughter, simply for having the wrong color skin. For some reason, the Canadian prime minister doesn't want that to happen. He seems to feel that it might impede his party's chances in the next general election."

"It doesn't signify, Mister President," said Janet Chalupiak. "All of the Nazi rocket launching bases will be wiped out by the Air Force in the first hour after you give the order to go green. For heaven's sake! The things are made out of *wood and canvas!"*

"Well, some fiberglass as well," said Kanesha Knight. "Fiberglass. I read that somewhere."

"Possibly in a report from your own agency?" replied Chalupiak, rolling her eyes to the ceiling.

"Ah, but can we absolutely guarantee that will happen?" said President Wallace. "I hate to sound skeptical of our Air Force, who have the best planes and the best pilots in the world, and I am sure that General Bellows is correct when he assures us that all those little annoying accuracy problems with the Cruise and Tomahawks and Predators have been ironed out. They should be, since it now costs almost fifty million dollars for us to fire even a single one. But can we absolutely guarantee that a single V-Three full of phosgene *won't* land in Vancouver once the racists detect American troops passing through British Columbia, coming to take away their shitty little country? I think not, and neither does Prime Minister Simoneau. The Canadian government wants full plausible deniability until after the racist entity has been defeated and occupied, then they want to step forward and take their modest bow for having helped democracy triumph. They don't want the bad men taking any potshots at the Jewel of the Western Orient. That means no Canadian ground troops and all Canadian assistance has to stay on the QT until it's safe to acknowledge their contribution."

"The Canucks are yellow," said Modlin contemptuously.

"The Canadian voters the government is concerned about keeping alive to vote Liberal certainly are," said Wallace dryly. "Admiral Brava, don't worry, there will be more than enough pressure on the racists from the west applied by your colleagues in the navy. Five carriers is a hell of a lot of firepower: the *JFK II*, the *Kitty Hawk*, the *Hillary Rodham Clinton,* the *Delmar Partman* and the *Hornet*. Plus the missile subs *Harriet Tubman* and *Jesse Jackson*. We will flatten everything west of the Cascades from Eugene to Bellingham; Seattle and Portland and Olympia will be nothing but burning trash heaps in a junkyard, and our ground-based planes and missiles will blast Boise and Spokane and Missoula into powder until not one stone remains on the other, and racism will be but a bad memory in the world. There is no need for a fourth infantry prong. American air power is invincible; ground troops are just there to clinch the deal."

Vice President Jenner tactfully refrained from reminding the President that even under optimum conditions American air power, while often decisive in the past, had historically been far from invincible,

and the quality of their ground troops had been America's greatest military weakness since the Second World War. "There is always the possibility that we are underestimating their partisan unit defense strategy," said the Vice President diplomatically.

Wallace grinned. "Ah, yes, the terrible NVA guerrillas of old, ten feet tall with saber teeth, firing a machine gun in each hand while they leap through the northern woods like giant kangaroos. I wondered when they would make their appearance. I know the legend. Hugh, we've always known that was on the cards, and we have let it deter us for too long. What has always been these gangsters' big threat that they level against us? That they will fight all of our high-tech weaponry with low-tech, a simple bullet to the head of people who matter. That's how they beat us before, Hugh. When that guy lit that booby-trapped cigar and blew his own head off at the dinner table right here in the White House and right in front of Chelsea Clinton, she broke. They were sending America a message: no one is safe, and America's ruling class quailed before that message and surrendered. Now we have to be man enough to answer it with *come and do your worst, for you are an abomination, and we will no longer allow you to be.* They know full well that we could have taken back the Northwest any time we wanted to do so during the past twelve years, but we haven't done so because we let them buffalo us. So they threaten us with the one thing that the United States has traditionally feared more than anything else, the one way that America has always been defeated in the past—a long and drawn-out guerrilla war as we try to occupy a hostile country."

"It won't be hostile!" said Kanesha Knight. "We are the good guys! We will be welcomed as liberators!"

"No, we will not be, Kanesha," said Hunter Wallace firmly. "These are white people who for almost half a generation now have been living on their own and among their own, seeing only people who look like themselves, with no way to compel them to confront and deal with diversity and multiculturalism. History shows that white people won't do that unless they are forced to do so by the power of the state, so deeply is racism ingrained in us. You have no idea how seductive that kind of evil can be. Remember, when I was doing my intelligence work, I used to peddle that very same evil, and I never had to work very

hard to make a sale." Wallace always referred to his days as a Cognitive Dissonance operative on the internet for one of Cass Sunstein's early White House internet disruption programs as "intelligence work." He liked sounding like a glamorous James Bond type.

Wallace went on, "They have tasted the fruit of the poisoned tree, Kanesha, and I assure you, they will fight like the very devil rather than have that poisoned fruit taken away from them and be forced to eat healthy again, in both the moral and the dietary sense. Hell, never mind their racial hatred, some of them will fight like hell just so they can commit obscenities like lighting up a carcinogen or gorging on the flesh of a dead animal, as if humanity hasn't progressed at all in the past few thousand years and we were still predatory beasts living in caves. Their big threat they use to terrorize us is that they will take us back to those last few bad months before Longview when we were losing fifty soldiers and FATPOs a week, and not so much as a dime of revenue was coming in from the Northwest, and when the Northwest was draining the nation of money like a gigantic black hole. My benighted predecessor gave in to certain pressures . . ."

Angela Herrin spoke up for the first time. "President Clinton the Third had no choice. Israel was in danger, and Israel had to take priority," she said flatly, brooking no contradiction.

"Damn straight!" said the White House Chief of Staff, Ronald Schiff.

"Of course it did," said Wallace smoothly. "But sadly, that pressure no longer exists today, the Light Unto the Nations is no more, and so the United States of America can concentrate on recovering her own lost sheep, so to speak. That being said, there is a price we will have to pay. We weren't ready to pay it before." President Wallace looked around the room gravely. "We all need to accept that just as any rat will fight when cornered, these evil people are capable of targeting individuals in this administration, not just because we are enemies, but on the grounds of their color and gender alone. Perhaps even some of us in this room." Suddenly everyone else realized where the president was headed with this, and they all gave Kanesha Knight a covert glance that she didn't pick up on. The director of the CIA was thinking about

aliens, and whether they really flew down in flying saucers that made beautiful music like in that *Close Encounters* movie.

* * *

After the meeting in the Situation Room, President Hunter Wallace returned upstairs to the Oval Office and spent the next hour working, and doing so productively. Whatever one could say about Wallace's off-duty practices, and one could say a great deal, no one denied that the man was a workhorse. He had to be; the United States was in such terrible shape that a Bill Clinton-esque, hands-off president who tried to phone it in simply couldn't cut it any more.

In one hour, Wallace dictated a memo on shoring up the old Tennessee Valley Authority electric power grid, which was now verging on total collapse from years of neglect. He went over a speech his writers had produced for him to give to the Israel Remembrance Association at a $200,000-a-plate fund-raising dinner in New York next week. He checked his personal uncensored news feed from CNN on his computer, a feed available to only a few high government officials that reported what was actually going on in the world, and he made several calls to various functionaries based on what he saw there. Wallace conducted short personal meetings with the head of the NAACP and the head of the Securities and Exchange Commission. "Right, five o'clock!" he said, rising up. "Now for an hour of *me time*!" He punched the intercom, "Wanda, I have now ceased to exist until six o'clock. You know the drill."

"Yes, sir," came his secretary's voice. This was known among staffers as the president's "seventh inning stretch," during which he disported himself with his personal services assistant of the moment. She would afterwards retire via a back staircase to the main bedroom in the residence itself, using her own special key card to enter. A discreet Asian waiter, who in the tradition of thousands of years of harem guards saw and heard nothing, would bring her supper at 6:30 p.m. There she would await the main bedtime session, which could begin as late as midnight depending on the president's commitments for the evening. Afterward she might or might not spend the night, at the commander-

in-chief's discretion, before departing for her own home in an armored Secret Service limo. She reported back to the White House at 4:00 p.m. sharp, in case seventh inning stretch came a bit early. This routine went on seven days a week, although it was varied by weekend trips to Camp David and frequent, exciting and luxurious travel to the far corners of the earth on Air Force One. The world's most famous jet was equipped with its own "executive lounge" for stratospheric nookie.

Wallace strode over to the door of the original executive lounge and opened it. Georgia Myers stood up from the sofa where she was reading a disarmingly innocuous Harlequin romance, and she greeted the president with a kiss. What followed would have made the average Harlequin reader double over and vomit.

"He tappin' dat blondie again," said Secret Service Special Agent Jimbo Hadding to his buttoned-down, buzz-cut detail commander, Special Agent Lee Lyons.

"Tapping?" said Lyons dryly.

"Well, what he do," said Jimbo. Hadding was a gigantic black man, six feet five inches tall and three hundred pounds of ebony muscle, with a massive chest and shoulders. He literally looked like a gorilla dressed in a Brooks Brothers executive ensemble. When he stood straight, arms at his side, his knuckles almost reached his knees. His IQ was room temperature on a good day, but he did have two qualities that fitted him for his job: rare for a monkoid, he was a fairly good pistol shot, and he was just intelligent enough to memorize Secret Service security protocols and procedures and follow them to the letter, so long as nothing disrupted his routine and he didn't have to think. Hunter Wallace knew the PR value of having a faithful and visible African-American appearing with him in public, so he had cultivated Hadding and made a kind of protégé or pet out of him. In return for his boss's patronage, and a special permit to devour large amounts of barbecued ribs and fried chicken in the White House mess, Hadding responded with doglike devotion to his chief.

"I still don't like the idea of him banging a Northwester, even a Cataclysm survivor who lost her home to the enemy, and especially not now," said Lyons in a low voice. He was the one who had to do the thinking, and he didn't like the direction his thoughts were taking.

Operation Strikeout wasn't quite as top secret as the command team liked to think; word had been trickling out for some weeks now, and those outside the rarefied zone of the Situation Room whose job it was to worry were concerned that rumors would reach the media soon. "I checked that Halberstam bimbo out myself, full court press, and I recommended against her. A few things were off. She doesn't pass the sniff test."

"Obviously she pass *his* sniff test," replied the African with a wide, toothy grin. Lyons ignored him.

"She's a heavy stoner and she sleeps around, and that usually means indiscreet. She had some neighbors down the street when she was a kid in Missoula, some people named Campbell, and they were NVA. It would be okay if she really was Jewish, but she's not, her stepfather is. But the boss has been gaga for her ever since he saw her at that reception at the Corcoran Museum. Told me once she reminds him of his sister. He shouldn't even have been talking to her that night. We had her flagged because she was born in Montana, and he's supposed to follow our lead when we warn him off flagged individuals, but he didn't this time. I had a quiet word with him and he blew me off, then he insists on our starting the PSA paperwork on her, when Carolyn's contract still had six weeks to run."

"We didden find nothin' on de down-low," said Hadding. "I ran her ass, too. She jus' a junkie ho."

"She still makes my ass twitch, and not in a good way," said Lyons. "I'm keeping a close eye on her. I'm personally monitoring all her footage every minute she's in the building and she's not in the two dead zones where she actually works. You do that too, Jimbo. If that girl does anything that looks even a little off-kilter to you, you come to me and let me know."

"Mos' def," replied Hadding.

At six o'clock, President Hunter Wallace emerged from the executive lounge smiling and adjusting his tie. Georgia slipped out a few minutes later, her dress slightly disheveled as everyone expected it to be, and she strolled out of the Oval Office through the rear corridor on her way to the East Wing and the residence. Since she arrived, Georgia had fit right into both wings. She figured everyone knew who she was and why she

was there, so there was no need to be coy about it. She had reached the point where she now had a few acquaintances among the West Wing staff with whom she could nod and exchange a few words. Already a few staffers were sidling up to her in the White House mess, as the cafeteria was called, or in break rooms or her small cubicle where she played with the computer sometimes, trying to get close to the *maitresse en tître* and pick up some juicy gossip or information they could sell to the media, a traditional cottage industry in the West Wing.

Georgia moved along a private staff corridor, a euphemism for a servant's passage that ran the length of the West Wing from the Oval Office behind the Cabinet Room, the Roosevelt Room, and the Press Briefing Room. She was not allowed to use the open walkway along the West Colonnade—too public. It would have been possible for her to crack open a door and eavesdrop on Cabinet meetings and on conversations in a number of private offices from the servant's passageway, except that it was completely covered with closed-circuit cameras and she assumed audio mics as well, and any lingering or suspicious behavior on her part would have been instantly detected in the Secret Service control room.

The West Wing was connected to the Executive Residence in the East Wing by the center hall on the ground floor. Georgia entered the East Wing with her pass card. She nodded pleasantly to the uniformed Protective Services officer on the duty desk, walked past the Map Room, the China Room, and the Diplomatic Reception Room, then up the stairs past the first or State Floor and on to the presidential master bedroom on the right, in the actual residence on the second floor. She swiped her card and entered one of only two places in the entire White House complex that was completely free of any audio or visual surveillance or recording devices, the other being the "executive lounge" and its attached bathroom and shower off the Oval Office.

Georgia now had some hours alone and unobserved, but the problem was how to make use of that time. Not only did she have to collect every scrap of information she could about what was going on in the White House, but she had to get it out of the building and convert it into some kind of intelligible form and order for Bobby Campbell. The simplest way to do this was just to verbally report everything she saw

or heard, but that was proving problematic. It was hard for her to meet "Richie" anywhere in the District without being recorded on a spy camera of some kind, and trips out of the self-contained Green Zone, which had everything government people needed for a hermetically sealed existence, would draw suspicion. Many federal employees now lived and worked for decades without ever even going across the river to Arlington.

It was true the Office could arrange convenient outages when it was necessary for them to get together for half an hour or so, but this could only be done so often before somebody at DHS handling her routine VIP monitoring would notice and report the quirky camera cut-offs to the Secret Service, which would get them suspicious and lead to physical surveillance. Georgia had not yet been taken to see the Zombie Master in his own surveillance-free bubble. She could of course go into the White House wired for sound and video in a dozen different ways, but there were all kinds of electronic sensors, frequency detectors, body scans at all the entrances, and random security sweeps by Secret Service techs seeking to detect any signs of surveillance (besides theirs) and any transmission or unknown electronic device in operation. This was a tall order in a building full of electronic communications devices of every known kind, and there were ways around this, but the WPB had to be very careful, because Belladonna was a diamond asset that could not under any circumstances be compromised before she was able to fulfill her primary mission—not just White House gossip and policy tittle-tattle, but hard details about the when and where and how of Operation Strikeout.

The criminal techie geek Birdie had come up with a solution, acting on Vinnie Skins' request to come up with some way to get sensitive information such as bills of lading and shipping schedules out of bonded tobacco and kosher meat warehouses, which had anti-spying and hacking systems almost equivalent to those in the White House.

It simply wasn't practical for the Secret Service to confiscate everyone's personal devices of various kinds as they came in the White House door, because the staff used them all day for personal and political business. As a precaution against unauthorized data theft, on entering the White House the Protective Service door guards passed

each wireless phone, videophone, personal notebook, and Blackberry through a device which gave them an electronic configuration and snapshot of the drive and/or chips inside, together with their data content, X drive holding 300 gigabytes, Y chip holding 52.4 gigabytes, etc. These specifics were recorded on the security computer database. When each staffer left at night, their devices and laptops were again passed through the scanner and matched against their entrance data for that morning. Any extra data, or missing data causing a discrepancy, had to have a matching supervisor's download permission code recorded for that device during the day giving the time when the download was performed and the source of the download.

The system was incredibly cumbersome and almost useless, because so few people bothered with it during the day. Half of them forgot what they had downloaded or added to their personal computers and handheld devices by the time they got to security checkout. The result was a line of irritated and arrogant government prima donnas at every security exit at quitting time, all of them convinced they were far too important and powerful players to have to bother with such nonsense, and many of them abusing and insulting the long-suffering FPS officers who wanted to know why they had two more gigabytes of data on their day planner than they'd had at nine o'clock that morning. The line to leave ended up slowed to a crawl as employees tried to locate authorized supervisors on the phone and get them to OK an upload to a guard, staffers made a game of finding ways to sneak out of the White House without checking out through security, formal complaints and reprimands and apologies and memos flew like confetti, and the whole thing degenerated into a typical American clusterfuck. This gave a genuine spy like Georgia a good deal of wiggle room.

What Birdie came up with was a way to rig Georgia's SuperPod, her personal music player, so that she could load up to five terabytes of data onto the drive and conceal the fact. At some expense, the Office purchased for Georgia the deluxe Ayatollah Rockandrolla model, a pre-programmed SuperPod that contained every rock-and-roll, rockabilly, soul, Motown, heavy metal, grunge, ska, and any other popular music recorded in the last century, starting with Buddy Holly and the first Elvis. Everything except racist Skinhead rock music, Oi music, White

Noise, and Northwest rebel songs like *Third Brigade* and *The Boys of Elk River*, of course.

The tens of thousands of songs amounted to quite a bit of compressed data, but this drive was partitioned by Birdie on two levels in some manner that Bobby could not understand, and Georgia didn't even try. There were thousands of songs on the upper drive, and Georgia could create her own playlists and listen for hours, as could anyone else if they wanted proof that the SuperPod did indeed contain music. The lower partition was programmed in some voodoo-like manner so that when Georgia connected the Pod to a source computer or inserted a chip or flash drive, the new data uploaded onto the lower partition of the device's drive and overwrote the existing data there without adding or increasing the overall content. Georgia's SuperPod went through the Secret Service scanner in the afternoon when she reported for Seventh Inning Stretch and showed 5.2 terabytes of data, and out again the next morning showing 5.2 terabytes—just not all of it the same data.

It was risky. At the slightest hint of suspicion, the SuperPod drive could be seized and accessed with a password-cracking program, and the true contents displayed. There was an emergency code Georgia could text onto the pad that would wipe the drive so clean that Christ and all twelve apostles couldn't recover a single byte, but to do that was in itself as good as a confession if she were caught. But now not only did she have a way to bring actual confidential data out of the White House, but she had something to take out.

At the conclusion of seventh inning stretch in the executive lounge, President Wallace always ducked quickly into the shower to spruce up before resuming his official duties. Georgia needed a more leisurely time in the bathroom to clean up, shower, and sometimes to apply any necessary ointment or bandages to her body. This evening she had used the president's shower time to rifle through his pockets, and she had found a flash drive with the clear plastic handle labeled "SR Conference May 20." That was today's date, and SR had to be Situation Room. Taking advantage of the absence of spy cameras in the Oval Office love nest, Georgia whipped out her SuperPod and copied the contents of the flash drive onto it, then carefully replaced the drive in Wallace's inner jacket pocket where she found it just as he stepped out of the shower.

She was curious as to what she'd gotten. Now alone in the only other surveillance-free place in the building, she opened the file and picked a point at random to start playing. She saw Hunter Wallace's face and heard his voice: "We will flatten everything west of the Cascades from Eugene to Bellingham; Seattle and Portland and Olympia will be nothing but burning trash heaps in a junkyard, and our ground-based planes and missiles will blast Boise and Spokane and Missoula into powder until not one stone remains on the other, and racism will be but a bad memory in the world . . ."

Georgia texted an apparently innocuous message to a girlfriend at her old job that was relayed to Bob Campbell's phone, and told him she needed a meeting next morning at a certain bar and grill downtown, where the security cameras had been carefully turned aside so that one side entrance and a couple of tables at the back were in a blind spot. Georgia thought of her father and her brother in Montana, and the little baby boy she had seen when Bobby played their messages, and of what she was doing every night with the man who meant to murder them. She cried for a while, and then she got herself cleaned up. Her lover had told her he'd be up to bed early tonight.

Twenty-four hours later, the Northwest American Republic's Council of State sat in the conference room in Olympia and watched the whole previous day's meeting of their opposite numbers in the White House situation room. They heard Hunter Wallace say: "We will flatten everything west of the Cascades from Eugene to Bellingham; Seattle and Portland and Olympia will be nothing but burning trash heaps in a junkyard, and our ground-based planes and missiles will blast Boise and Spokane and Missoula into powder until not one stone remains on the other, and racism will be but a bad memory in the world."

Wallace did not hear his counterpart, State President Henry "Red" Morehouse as he spoke aloud, to no one in particular, "No, sir. You won't."

XII

Plan 17

(12 years and seven months after Longview)

All men can see these tactics whereby I conquer, but what none can see is the strategy out of which victory is evolved.
—Sun Tzu

State President Henry "Red" Morehouse arrived at Fort Lewis with his entourage on a morning in late May, ostensibly for a routine inspection tour during the day and a formal reception in the officer's mess that night. As part of that inspection, the president disappeared indoors at the base commander's office for several hours under the watchful eye of the American surveillance satellites hundreds of miles out, during which time he was taken through an underground tunnel to a building a quarter of a mile away that was officially the base laundry, and which emitted sufficient quantities of steam every day to prove it for the benefit of the enemy watching from above.

In a sub-basement beneath the laundry, Morehouse was shown to the General Staff's new command center, which had been established to meet the present emergency. "When the actual invasion comes, Red, this will be too dangerous a target, and we'll have to keep you on the move," Defense Minister Carter Wingfield told the president. "After H-Hour, tactical command will be delegated down to the individual units. You and Vice President Brennan will be in separate mobile communications centers, moving around the Republic as dictated by events, to keep you one step ahead of any air strikes, and hopefully confuse any satellite surveillance they have left after Rotfungus. But most individual decisions will have to be made by field grade officers on the ground."

"There had better not be either any air strikes or any satellite surveillance for us to worry about," Morehouse told him grimly. "Both Bluelight and Rotfungus *have* to work! We can't fight against our own sky."

In the command center President Morehouse met with the Special Planning Group, as the floating mini-War Cabinet and team of attached staff had been named, to receive one of his regular briefings on the constantly evolving details of Plan 17. Ever since the first year of the Northwest Republic's existence, at least once a year the General Staff of the Northwest Defense Force had reviewed and put together an updated plan for dealing with just this contingency, a full-blown American attack against the nation in an attempt to re-enslave it. The first plan had been called Plan One, and this was the seventeenth update in twelve years, hence Plan 17. In the NDF's center, there were none of the fancy blinking lights, plasma screens, and electronic gadgetry that could be found in the White House Situation Room. There was just a simple room with a table and chairs, large maps on the wall, a single satellite-linked TV for monitoring CNN, a small bank of radio and computer gear, and some dedicated phone lines.

General John Morgan chaired the briefing. "We are now certain we have a pretty full picture of what they're planning," he told Morehouse. "Our information comes from human intelligence sources, of course, including that incredible Belladonna project, but also from dozens of other agents positioned in various places in the enemy's infrastructure. Charlie Randall hasn't been sitting on his hands for the past twelve years, I can tell you. In addition to our spies, we have info from hacked enemy satellites and computers as well."

"First and biggest question," said Morehouse. "Frank, do *they* know that *we* know for sure they're coming? If they do, if they understand that they've lost the element of surprise and there won't be any Northwest Pearl Harbor, that might cause them to move up D-Day or change their plan."

"As nearly as we can ascertain, no sir, they don't know for sure that we know," said Frank Barrow, Minister of Security, through whom all the intelligence efforts of the Special Planning Group were being coordinated. "Oh, they know we're skittish, and we've spotted

some disinformation and concealment attempts on their part. They're assuming that we have enough sense to sniff something in the wind, but they're hoping that we won't guess the magnitude of it. As always, they're underestimating our intelligence in every sense of the word. Amazing as it seems, the government of Amurrica still seems to have the same kind of hubris that lost them the War of Independence in the first place. Jews simply can't wrap their minds around the fact that they are *not* smarter than everybody else. They have learned nothing and forgotten nothing."

"Go on," said Morehouse.

John Morgan picked it up. "We now can break down the enemy order of battle as follows: Operation Strikeout begins with the massive war game called Operation Blast Furnace, in eastern Montana and the Dakotas, and that's getting underway this weekend as the 82nd and 101st Airborne do a lot of spectacular show jumps over Fargo and Billings, a few military parades in small prairie towns with bands and nice shiny tanks, all very out in the open, oh-no-we're-not-hiding-anything, you get the idea. It is the most massive exercise ever conducted by the American military, comprising almost sixty percent of the entire United States armed forces, and it involves all of the land and air forces that will comprise the invasion. Even their field grade officers, major generals and below, have been kept in ignorance of the fact that this is not a drill, and I suspect that may backfire on the Pentagon. Generals don't like being treated like children to be sent out of the room when the adults are talking. They'll feel resentful, and it's bound to show in their response.

"This kind of monkeyshine has been something they do every couple of years as a form of rattling their saber. Basically, they get almost all their combat troops as close as they can to our frontier and cut a swagger, play a little grab-ass, pop a few shells over the border, kind of like a gorilla beating its chest. They do this either to the east of us, like this time, or else down in Colorado on the Wyoming border. They've done it four times prior to this, causing us to call up at least some of the first-line reserves as a precaution. Then they use their satellites to study our reaction, to see how we've positioned our men and equipment to repel an attack if it turns into the real thing. By now, they figure

we're getting a little blasé about it, and they think they can catch us off guard. They're counting on their attacking across the Canadian border to surprise us, since Canada's always been quiet. Lots of nasty rhetoric from Ottawa, but never any military provocation. Vancouver is too close and we could do too much damage to the mansions of the wealthy Chinese ex-pats who are some of the main supporters of Simoneau and his Liberal party government."

"So in other words, the Americans actually *expect* us to mobilize our reserves, and they will be allowing us time to do so?" asked Morehouse. "That's their first mistake right there."

"They really have no choice, Mister President," spoke up Colonel Garrison from Combined Military Intelligence. "They know that any complete element of surprise can't be achieved, and the closer they get to D-Day, the more likely we'll be able to twig to what's up. They want to razzle-dazzle us with smoke and mirrors, and they think they can pull it off. In practical fact, in this technological age it is simply impossible to conceal that kind of major troop movement on either side in a built-up and surveilled area like North America, without somebody in someone's intelligence analysis unit spotting it from space. They're not total idiots, and despite the hubris that their political leadership displays, they have sense enough to get that we're not completely stupid either. They have known for years that we hack into their spy satellites and use their own gear to spy on them. They're relying on misdirection, rather than deception."

"Oh, they know we watch them through their own eyes in the sky, all right," said Frank Barrow. "There has been a quiet little cyber-war going on for a long time, where we try to wipe out one another's ground computers with viruses."

"Not the on-board computers?" asked Morehouse keenly. "Frank, can we get any kind of take on whether or not they know about Rotfungus?"

"I don't think so, Red," said Barrow. "Nothing in the chatter we can pick up indicates they're worried about a super-virus, although one can never really know what the other guy really thinks. There's always the chance that we've been bluffed and stroked, or we think we've bluffed and stroked them when we haven't. That's the nature of the

spying game. Our intel indicates that the Americans have considered the possibility of something like Rotfungus, sure. Obviously, any time there are computers involved you have to worry about viruses. They periodically update the firewalls and the AV and security software for the onboard drives in space, but they're not really concerned with that, because they believe what we want to do is actually hijack the spy satellite system by reprogramming the on-board software and then use it ourselves, while denying them access to it. We did that a few times with the Lazarus Birds, so that makes sense to them. I wish to hell we *could* figure out more ways to do that, but they've already cracked the programs we used and secured their satellites against them. Apparently, they consider any attempt on our part simply to destroy the whole orbiting communications network up there and blind everybody on earth except our Russian friends to be a long shot. Just because they wouldn't wipe out billions of dollars' worth of expensive equipment, much of it the private property of big multinational corporations, they think we won't either. Rotfungus specifically seems to be a secret still; none of the AV programs they're uploading so far appears designed for it. I once spent an hour with Doctor Joseph Cord wherein he explained to me in great detail why Rotfungus is so special, something about it not attacking the programming on the on-board drives themselves, which will be heavily firewalled and guarded, but the BIOS on all the operating devices and peripherals on the satellite. I couldn't understand a word he said."

"Join the club, but Doctor Frankencord has never failed us yet. I think we can take it from him that Rotfungus will work," said Morehouse. "It had *better* work; otherwise this will be a really short war."

Morgan took up the thread again. "Getting back to the assembly of the invasion force on our eastern border, around the middle of June, presumably under the illusion that they are still fooling us, the Americans will divide into two groups. The Americans' Group North will attack through Canada with something on the order of one hundred and seventy-five thousand men, including three army corps, three full Marine divisions, six armored brigades, and three airborne brigades they intend to use as spearheads and drop into the Republic first, in

order to seize key points in Montana and Idaho. The ground invasion force will slash down into Idaho and take Coeur d'Alene, Spokane, and keep on heading south.

"The remaining enemy forces will in turn divide and attack us through eastern Montana in two columns, Group Center coming more or less down old U.S. Eighty-Seven, and Group South will come down old Interstate Ninety-two hundred thousand men, divided into five army corps and including seven armored brigades and two field artillery brigades. It will be what they call a Baghdad Boogie, based on the original dash to Baghdad in 'Ought Three from Kuwait. Both columns will be completely mechanized, and the Pentagon has allocated twenty-four hours before they will be entering Butte, Helena, and Great Falls, then another twenty-four hours to take Missoula and Kalispell. They will turn southwest and link up with Army Group North in Boise, and then start sending columns westward to places like Bend and other places east of the Cascades. Immediately following the front line troops will come the first elements of their Northwest Stability Force, which is what they call that FATPO-like army of occupation they've been training at Fort Bragg, in order to hold down what the actual military takes. That is when the bad part will start for our civilian population on the ground."

"Mechanization is their key weakness," said Carter Wingfield. "The Luftwaffe and our best Partisan Ranger units have to take out their vehicles and fuel supplies first, put the bastards on shank's mare. Then once we've slowed them to a crawl we begin the counterattack with our main ground forces. This is assuming our own vehicles and forces aren't plastered all over the landscape or pinned down due to the enemy's control of the air."

Morgan continued grimly: "In the meantime, Aztlan's Fuerza del Ejército del Norte will attack from California and Nevada on a broad front, but mostly up the I-Five corridor, four hundred thousand men in eighteen divisions, three of them Assault Guards who have been trained by the Chinese and North Koreans. Most of the Aztec army is just mestizo peons, not very well trained and armed with whatever they've been able to beg or borrow from other countries' military surplus, but those *Asaltos* are bad news. They've not only got better

training and equipment than the mestizo conscripts, but they're more ideologically and racially motivated. Complete the *Reconquista*, death to the gringos, Viva La Raza, you get the idea. The Aztecs have over one thousand combat helicopters with Chinese crews, which will be valuable in the kind of mountainous terrain they're going to have to cover at first before they can get down onto the coastal plain or up into the high desert. They also have at least seven hundred tanks in various stages of obsolescence. Counting U.S. Air Force and naval personnel from the seaborne task force, the combined Mexican and American force which will be invading the Northwest Republic approaches one million men."

"Even I can see there's something wompy-jawed here just by looking at the map," said Morehouse, rubbing his chin thoughtfully. "They're not directing *anything* against Wyoming, which will be sitting there on their southern flank?"

"Not really, sir," said Garrison. "Air strikes at military installations in Cheyenne, Casper, Sheridan, and Cody, but that's about it. It's like they've almost forgotten it exists, which I admit is easy to do. Hell, sometimes *we* forget Wyoming exists."

"What is our fully mobilized reserve military strength in Wyoming, all arms?" asked the State President.

"With the Civil Guard, almost two hundred thousand men, including four armored and four field artillery regiments. By way of regulars we've got the Preobrazhensky Regiment and the Don Cossacks at Sheridan, and the First Mountain Brigade at Yellowstone, and about a hundred V-3s at Laramie and Cheyenne we can use to hit Colorado Springs and Denver, but we were going to move those up to North Bend so we could drop 'em on Vancouver if need be."

"Continue with the relocation. No point in pissing off the folks in Colorado when their sector is quiet, and besides, they're still mostly white down there. John, did you work up those figures I asked you to last time?"

"Yes, sir," said Morgan. "On your order, as soon before D-Day as you think we can do it without tipping them off, we can have at least another thirty thousand regulars down there, including a lot of

our tanks, the Panzer Grenadiers and the Ninth and Twelfth Panzer Regiments."

Morehouse nodded. "Good. Send warning orders to the regimental commands to get ready. We'll start sending them in now, a battalion at a time, at night, covered freight cars. Make sure you replace the missing tanks with blow-ups at their home bases, again by night, so the satellites don't pick up on it, or at least they'll be confused as hell. Are we moving the real tanks into Wyoming, or are those the inflatables? Keep everything as much under cover as possible. Then when that American Group South moves into Montana, we slice in behind them, cut them off, and hit them from the rear."

"Brava and Scheisskopf can't see this coming?" wondered SS General Billy Jackson. "Don't they teach map reading at West Point and Annapolis any more?"

"They think their almighty air power will prevent any major troop deployment on our part. Admiral Leach, you want to fill us in on the enemy seaborne attack?"

"Bloody Dave" Leach spoke up. "At H-Hour, from the west, the Republic will simultaneously be hit from the air by what they call Naval Task Force Soaring Eagle, probably from a distance of around a hundred miles offshore, which gives them plenty of water to see our own navy coming, such as it is. This will be within range of our Yakhonts shore batteries, so those will presumably be the first targets they aim for, possibly the very first shots fired at the Republic. To be blunt, even if we can get off all our Russian missiles from the shore, most of them may not make it, because the U.S. Navy's defense systems are designed to take out just that kind of high-tech attack. We'll have to see how it plays out.

"Soaring Eagle consists of five carriers, two missile subs, eight frigates, and twenty-one destroyers. They will be convoyed together and a direct attack on them, which is our only option once we've fired the Yakhonts, will result in massive naval casualties on our side no matter what the outcome. They are also armed with HELs, high-energy laser weapons, designed specifically to combat small attacking surface craft, so they know what to expect. We haven't been able to come up with any plan other than a flat-out full attack with everything we've

got, concentrating on the carriers. *We have to stop those bombers,* and we can't rely on Bluelight to do it**.** We just don't have enough of the projectors and trained crews to fire them, and those we do have need to be concentrated in the east where the bulk of the American air power and above all their paratrooper drops will be coming at us. We have to take out those goddamned carriers and missile subs on the sea."

"The Luftwaffe will be placing our entire force of jets at the western defense command's disposal for the purpose of dealing with the attack from the sea," spoke up Air Marshal Billy Basquine. "That's not much, about sixty aircraft, almost all of which are converted private business jets, pre-Longview. We simply haven't been able to afford to compete in an arms race with the major capitalist powers and their huge budgets, not without crushing our own people with taxation of the kind our Constitution forbids. Our best planes are the Aerions, converted into the missile assault fighters we call Skyhawks. We have sixteen of them. They can cruise at Mach 1.6, and our engineers have souped them up and reinforced them to where they can do a Mach 2 missile run, maybe a little faster. They're armed with Exocet Fives, which we have renamed Mjolnirs. The problem is that any attack on that fleet is going to run into a concentrated mass of firepower from computer-controlled chain guns, surface-to-air missiles, and laser weapons, not to mention F-22s and F-35s from the carriers themselves that will be able to swat down anything we've got like flies. It's an integrated air defense system to which Mach 2 is as slow as molasses in wintertime. The enemy's anti-aircraft defenses are designed to deal with high-speed jet attackers in just this kind of situation.

"The Skyhawks carry two Mjolnir missiles whose warheads detonate at over eight thousand degrees Fahrenheit, and can melt through a steel hull like butter in a microwave. No question at all they can sink a carrier if our guys can just get one or two lucky, well-placed hits. We have handpicked and briefed the two-man Skyhawk crews, and explained what they're going to have to do. They are all young men, mostly unmarried, mostly National Socialist. They know most of them won't be returning to base, and they're up for it. The plan is to concentrate the Skyhawks on one carrier, most likely one of the two big ones, the *Kitty Hawk* or the *JFK II*, and then they all make their missile runs at once

from three different angles and try to overwhelm the ship's defenses in one mass attack. I think we can guarantee that at least one carrier will go down that way, Mr. President. Beyond that, it's in the lap of the gods. Our other jets will attack at the same time, of course, but they're converted Lears and Airbuses, and frankly they probably won't be able to accomplish much except to run interference and draw fire away from the Skyhawks. Okay, let's look on the bright side, maybe they can sink a couple of frigates. But we're going to lose most of them, may Hunter Wallace burn in hell."

"We decided against an attempt to use our propeller-driven planes?" asked Morehouse.

Basquine shook his head. "This isn't Midway in 1942, sir. Our pilots are all willing and fully committed to defending the Republic, giving up their lives if they have to, but I simply can't order that kind of pointless suicide attack. We will need the Songbirds and Starfighters and all our combat choppers on the eastern and southern fronts dealing with the ground invasion."

"Who expect to meet no resistance at all, apparently," said Morehouse.

Barrow said, "Oh, they figure we'll resist, but since our forces are almost completely infantry, they think they will simply brush us aside and then we'll run off into the woods and take up the guerrilla insurgency again where we left off, like we've always threatened. Like the Iraqis did in 'Ought Three. Apparently, the Pentagon is good with that. Hunter Wallace is looking for a quick morale victory so he can get that third-term resolution through Congress and get his weak little ass re-elected as the Fearless Leader who re-unified Amurrica."

"Their strategy is to seize control of the Republic's population and infrastructure centers, if the bombing leaves us any," said Wingfield. "They know that we simply do not have the kind of high technology and heavy armored weaponry that they have. Our individual soldiers usually don't even wear personal body armor except in a few special units. We can't afford it. They actually aren't worried about conquering the Republic. It's always been one of their givens that they could do that any time they want. It's something everybody has always assumed, including us during the first few years of our existence. The reason they haven't done so up until now is that we've successfully used their

fear of the one thing that America cannot sustain and which always defeats them—a long-term, low-level and low-tech guerrilla campaign in hostile country by a people who don't want to be occupied by nigger and beaner soldiers. They're more concerned with getting Operation Chain Link's army of occupation properly trained at Fort Bragg and getting them up here and lording it over us so as to look good and have Amy Lieberman reporting live from Seattle again on CNN, that kind of crap. Apparently, Wallace has now decided that a long and low-level guerrilla war is preferable to the humiliation of a white nation in North America that consistently shows up the mighty United States in every sphere of human endeavor. In a way he may be right; now that America no longer has the immense overseas military commitment it had during the War of Independence, maintaining the Northwest in a state of subjection is a lot more financially feasible."

"Any idea at all on H-Hour?" asked Morehouse.

"Brava wants 0600 hours on June 21st, and his people are using that as their presumed H-Hour, but Wallace still won't give the final okay," said Frank Barrow.

"So what can we throw against these bastards?" asked Morehouse.

"Almost five million men and women under arms, including our regulars, who are the best trained and most highly motivated individual soldiers in the world. Enough to kick their asses, if we can accomplish three things in the first couple of days," said Morgan. "First, we have to blind the sons of bitches. We have to take out their eyes in the sky with Rotfungus. Then we have to take out their air power with Bluelight. Finally, we have to take out the bulk of the motorized transport in all four invading columns with Songbirds, Starfighters, 75s and 88s, any way we can, and make the bastards slog in here on foot. Take away their toys and the shields they hide behind. Make them get down and dirty, man-to-man and hand to hand with armed and angry white men. Especially the Mexicans coming from the south, get them all tangled and strung out along those mountain roads and along the Pacific Coast Highway, where we can set an ambush around every bend and in every valley."

"What we have to bear in mind is that this force they're sending against us comprises virtually the entire effective combat strength of

the United States military," said Wingfield. "We will oppose them with approximately four hundred thousand regular soldiers of the NDF, including twelve SS regiments in three divisions, who in my opinion are literally equivalent to ten times their number of any Americans you care to name, and who will be kept back as a mobile reserve and thrown in wherever it gets the hottest. Add to that around fifty thousand Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe personnel, forty thousand Civil Guards, and a little over four and a half million reservists of all types, including ancillary formations such as the Young Pioneers and the Category B Special Reserve of men from age 50 on up. It will be their small core of heavily armed and technologically supported professionals versus an entire white nation in arms. The microchip against the human spirit. A battle that has been a long time coming."

"World War Three versus World War One, as someone once put it," said Barrow sourly. "We outnumber them like hell, and they're counting on their high-tech gadgetry to slaughter us like jack rabbits."

"You got it," said Wingfield. "These people are throwing professional mercenaries against an entire nation, and if it's any consolation, it would appear that they are shooting their whole wad on this attack. If we can defeat and disable the American forces invading us, they have virtually no combat reserves to back them up or to resist Plan 17's counterattacks into California and Canada. There are well over a million people in the U.S. Army and Marine Corps alone, but only a few of them have anything to do with actual fighting. The American military was always top-heavy with support personnel—it still requires something like *seventy* people behind the lines in various capacities to keep one combat soldier in the field. Our ratio of support to combat personnel has always been kept as close to one-to-one as we can make it. We'll have the bastards outnumbered, and we'll be on interior lines."

"They will have massive heavy equipment and high technology to beat us with," said Morgan. "We have a few techie tricks up our sleeve that might or might not work, but our boys will damned sure have some good rifles and light artillery, and the ability to hit what they aim at. This will get interesting."

* * *

United States Army Lieutenant General Albert Scheisskopf, the buzz-cut Chief of Operations for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, thought so too, only *interesting* wasn't the word he used. "This is going to be a cluster-fuck," he bluntly told Admiral Hector Brava, in a closed-door meeting of the top brass in Brava's Pentagon office. They didn't dare use a formal conference room for fear of attracting notice, and Brava had taken the precaution of using a discreet private security firm to sweep his office and his home for surreptitious listening and video devices. They had found two sets, one from the Department of Homeland security and one of unknown provenance but most likely from the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, which was now the operational arm of the former Israeli Mossad. "We are underestimating the enemy and we are approaching this whole operation in a sloppy and unprofessional manner," Scheisskopf went on. "I have repeatedly pointed out that we will be outnumbered almost five to one, and the Doughboy babbles on about how we were outnumbered in Iraq and Iran and Afghanistan as well, so forth and so on."

"Wars we eventually lost," pointed out Brava sourly.

"You try to tell the Doughboy that," said Air Force Lieutenant General Norwood Bellows. "I can understand him not knowing any history. Most Americans don't. But Iraq and Afghanistan and Iran aren't Valley Forge, they happened when he was a Congressman, for fuck's sake! We know they have some kind of special anti-aircraft weapon they're planning on using against our pilots, but nobody can get any take on what the hell it is, unless you believe that ridiculous Knight woman's babble about alien ray guns. We presume this Bluelight thing is something similar to our own High Energy Laser weapons, in which case we could be in for some trouble, but we haven't been able to mount any effective intelligence effort inside the Republic for—wait, can I say Republic in here without getting court-martialed?" he interposed bitterly.

"I think you're safe," said Brava. "I *think* you're safe. I *think* my guys got all the bugs out of here and nobody has come nosing around trying to plant more yet."

"The point is, why in God's name are we attacking *anybody* with this kind of lack of reliable intel?" whined Bellows. "For Christ's

sake, we didn't go into pissant countries like Grenada or Panama this blind!"

"The president thinks the satellite surveillance is all we need," Brava told them. "Sure, it's impressive. We can watch what goes on anywhere in the NAR like we were looking over our back fence—when it's daytime, and when there's no cloud cover, and when we know where to look to see something interesting, and when we have halfway intelligent analysts to figure out what we're looking at. And when the Nazis aren't misdirecting us with inflatable tanks and weird machines that turn out to be International Harvesters with fake weapons glued onto them."

"They're not all Nazis," said Selkirk.

"I know that, and you know that, but our political bosses don't seem to know or care," said Brava. "We don't even really know the people we're going to be fighting, and that's incredibly dumb, believing one's own propaganda. We know that some of the tanks and aircraft we see are blown-up inflatable dummies. We know that some of the troop movements we see are the same guys marching in and out and here and there just to confuse us—hell, those tricks are as old as Quaker guns and Jeb Magruder marching his men around the mountain. The president doesn't understand that we need actual human intelligence on the ground so that we know what the hell we're looking at and why. The CIA is useless, it's run by a—well, we all know who it's run by. Our external military intelligence arms are limited by Congress and by rules and regulations as to what we can or can't do, by jurisdictional squabbles and budget and every other goddamned thing, plus it's just plain hard to get actual physical spies on the ground in the Republic with any kind of serious training or skills and get them positioned to be of any use. Either the goddamned BOSS catches them and they disappear, or else they disappear on their own. You know we found one of our naval intelligence agents who had been missing for five years? He simply walked into BOSS one day and turned himself in; they wrung him dry of information and let him go. He's living in Tillamook, Oregon, now, working on a fishing boat, he's married and has a couple of kids. By definition anyone we use has to be white, and white men seem to be subject to—well, temptation."

"I can't believe that Herrin woman actually used the word 'cakewalk' the other day," said Marine Corps Commandant Louis Battaglia. "These are the same men who defeated and killed Delmar Partman and eight thousand United States Marines, only now they have a properly trained professional military of over five million. What fucking planet are those people in the White House living on?"

"I find it difficult to believe that the Northmen are going to shoot down all our aircraft with alien death rays, never mind Kanesha Knight's demented ramblings," said Scheisskopf. "If this Bluelight thing is some kind of HEL they have been able to convert to anti-aircraft use, although we could never do it, then yes, we may lose some planes and missiles, but they won't be able to take down enough to affect the actual turn of events. The first forty-eight hours of shock and awe from the air will make it impossible for them to resist the occupation of the Northwest. We occupy the main population centers and bring in the Stability Force to gradually return American authority, American courts, and the rule of law to the rural areas, and then finally get them back on the dollar and paying twelve years' worth of back taxes, which will go a long way to solving the country's financial problems. But that's the simple part. We could have done that three months after that disgraceful Longview sellout, and we should have. But as things are, we're going to be dealing with millions of people who have gotten used to going walkies whenever and wherever the hell they want without the leash, and they have to be re-conditioned in their minds to civilized thought and behavior. There will be resistance for years, and it will probably be a generation before it's really safe for an African-American or a Hispanic-American or a gay or lesbian American to live in Seattle or Spokane again."

"I'm not convinced that all five million of those armed racists are going to simply throw down their weapons and cower in holes while the bombs fall," said Battaglia. "These aren't Iraqis or Muslim peasants in Bumfuckistan who have never seen a flush toilet. These are *Americans*, goddammit! Most of them, anyway."

"Run down what we know of their probable defense strategy again, Al?" asked Brava.

"They don't use divisions like we do, except in the Special Service, the SS, which is their élite spearhead force," Scheisskopf told them. "The basic fighting unit of the NDF ground forces is the regiment, consisting of three regular battalions that number around 700 men each. In time of war, as many as ten extra battalions of reservists will bring an infantry regiment to full combat strength, which can be as high as nine thousand men. Each battalion in turn has six companies: four infantry companies, one support company of quartermasters and medics and technicians, and one heavy weapons company. The heavy weapons company usually consists of light artillery in the form of 75-millimeter or 88-millimeter anti-tank and anti-personnel guns, vehicle-mounted recoilless rifles and twin .50-calibers, and a few armored assault vehicles, so every battalion packs a heavier punch than just small arms. In addition to which, batteries of an actual artillery battalion can be attached to line battalions in the field, as can any other damned thing like these death rays, if they exist. Those 88-mil self-propelled guns are going to give us problems, especially our armor. They're based on the German World War Two version, but everything about them has been updated and modernized. They have an accurate range of over eight miles, in a war that will be fought over a lot of open country, and their SuperSemtex shells can disable even our heaviest tanks.

"An NDF infantry battalion is organized, trained, and used tactically as a self-contained and self-sustaining unit." Scheisskopf continued. "In essence, when we go across that border we aren't going to be facing two or three enemy armies, we will be facing hundreds of small armies of between seven hundred and a thousand men each, all capable of acting independently, striking independently or else coordinating with other units, striking, and then dispersing. We will have the same problem on land that the Navy will have with Task Force Soaring Eagle and all those little torpedo boats and whatnot the Northmen have invested in. We'll be the biggest and meanest motherfuckers in the valley of death, but we'll be facing not a handful sharks, but a school of piranhas. The terrain will favor them—lots of room for maneuver on the plains and lots of ravines and forests and valleys for ambushes in the mountain country. Not to mention the fact that the Northmen have spent over a decade training those very units we'll be going up against all over

that very terrain, so they'll have home ground advantage. We will win, Hector. Our satellites will tell us every move they make and our air power will ensure that they have nothing left to fight with or for. I don't believe in alien death rays, and there's no way they can shoot down B-52s at thirty-thousand feet with souped-up civvie prop jobs. But it's not going to be a cakewalk. It's going to be a long and drawn-out bloody mess, we are going to lose a lot of people, and it will go on until the Stability Force can get most of the racists dead and corral the rest, ship them out and disperse them. Then we can bring in loyal and diverse American communities to re-settle the Northwest."

"You know that the unofficial word is that there won't be many civvies left to ship out?" asked Brava.

Scheisskopf shrugged. "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. You rebel against the United States of America, the greatest country in the world, then you pay the price. I just don't like the price we're going to be paying because our commander-in-chief, uh . . . well, you know."

"We know," said Brava with a sigh.

* * *

When he wasn't handling Georgia for Operation Belladonna, Richie from Chicago spent the month of May doing his day job as a buttlegger and beeflegger in the District of Columbia Green Zone. Even in this comparatively safe and prosperous environment, what he saw made him sick, and confirmed that everything he remembered from the old American days in Montana and everything he had learned in school about the revolution and the reasons for it was true.

He hand-delivered cartons of cigarettes and boxes of cigars to the homes and offices of Congressmen and Senators and major government functionaries who gave stirring speeches to the media and on the legislative floor about the evils of tobacco and the nobility of a cruelty-free vegetarian diet, then snuck out onto their private balconies for a steak or fried chicken dinner discreetly prepared in one of the many covert private kitchens that had been set up throughout every government office building, topped off with a cigarette or a luxurious Cohiba or

Macanudo. Bob had no objection to tobacco, although he chose not to smoke himself because of the real health risks, and he considered the ban on meat to be simply one more bit of madness in a society that had clearly gone insane. But the level of sheer hypocrisy in America stunned him; more than once he had made deliveries right at the Department of Health, which was responsible for enforcing the bans, and he had walked down corridors to the sound and smell of sizzling bacon from one of the break room kitchens, to hand over cartons of smokes to officials who had the power to arrest him on the spot for breaking the same law they were breaking themselves. It was bizarre.

He quickly learned not to watch American television. It seemed to consist of nothing but gibbering, bubble-lipped black faces shouting obscenities, and naked people of all races and genders committing indiscriminate acts of perversion with each other, with animals, and with assorted inanimate objects. That and Spanish soap operas. Occasionally he watched one of the so-called news broadcasts, which consisted of slavish adulatory puff pieces about President Hunter Wallace and certain selected political celebrities of the One Nation Indivisible persuasion, as well as alleged news stories that Bob knew full well to be either false, misleading, or pure fantasy. "News stopped being news here a long time ago," Cardinale explained to him. "It's just another form of entertainment."

Bob did occasionally watch what purported to be news stories and documentaries about the Northwest Republic. He was tempted simply to laugh, but it really wasn't funny, because he came to understand that most people actually *believed* this drivel, or if they didn't, then they didn't dare to say so. Apparently, people in the Northwest were all either A) starving and on the brink of revolting against the Party because of the economic sanctions, or B) dying of heart attacks and hardened arteries from gorging on Montana beef, Washington chicken, and Oregon dairy products. He learned to his amazement that the Republic had forbidden anyone to use white plastic garbage bags because it "showed disrespect for the white master race," and they were required to use black. (In real life, no one in the Republic used plastic garbage bags at all, of any color, because they were wasteful, and there were better uses for the country's polyethylene manufacturing capabilities. Organic waste was collected

for fertilizer in the notorious "honey wagons" of Northwest song and humor, while beverage containers were of glass, steel, and aluminum and were recycled.)

Bob learned from American TV that the Bureau of State Security was the great bugaboo in the Northwest, an all-powerful and all-seeing secret police who were "licensed to kill," who tyrannized folks and arrested them for listening to a song by a black "artist" on their computer, so forth and so on. Bob knew damned well that was a lie, because he was a Guard himself back home, and as a member of the CID detective force, he had occasionally worked with BOSS.

There were around a hundred BOSS agents throughout the entire Northwest Republic. The BOSS office in Missoula consisted of a man in older middle age, Major Leonard Painting, and four agents who covered the eastern part of the NAR in Montana and occasionally lent a hand down in Wyoming when necessary. Painting seemed more interested in fly-fishing and building carpentry items in his garage workshop; he had made an actual cradle for Bob Three, which Ida had inherited when she came along. He almost never wore the plain black BOSS uniform without insignia, except on formal occasions like October 22nd and April the 20th, but he did wear the Old NVA rosette, the Battle of Portland ribbon, and the Consolidation ribbon on his civilian shirts. Painting never talked about the old days, and he came across as a mild-mannered old duffer, but Bob's NVA brother-in-law Jason Stockdale once told Bob a story about Painting from that time which caused him to treat the older man with a respect amounting to awe.

Once Painting had talked about BOSS in a general way. "Yeah, it's true; we're pretty much above the law. It's in the Constitution, in fact. We're authorized to take whatever action we consider necessary to safeguard the existence of the Republic, because it has to be that way. Evil people want us all dead, my boy, and sometimes the white man needs a blunt instrument to deal with that. It is the highest calling in racial service. We have a motto that hangs in our office: *We have to win every time. The Jews only have to win once.* Not a man or woman gets their button in this organization unless and until they are known to possess the necessary intelligence, patriotism, and judgment to exercise power like that for the good of all. Every one of us has served in the regular

military or the police, no exception. You want to join BOSS? I'll be glad to give you a recommendation, in about ten years' time, when I've been able to give you a good long looking over, and I know that you will not ever commit a single act in your life that is not in the service of this country and the mighty fine race of people who live in it."

One night Bob caught a show on TV involving BOSS agents allegedly arresting a beautiful young woman for falling in love with a negro online, dragging her away to a cellar, and subjecting her to sickeningly graphic sexual torture. He turned it off in a rage and ranted about it the next day to Vincent Cardinale. "Yeah, I remember that show," he said. "They're re-running it?"

"On the Drama Channel," said Bob.

"I'm surprised. I thought they got the message."

"What?" asked Bob.

"They did that shit in secret," Cardinale told him. "All of the credits at the end were phony names, but we found out who they were. The scriptwriter and the producer were Jews, big surprise, and the director was some fag. They did it out of New York, again big surprise. Our station up there tracked them down and cacked the kikes, threw one of them out of a thirty-story window and shot the second one in an underground parking garage in Tribeca. They broke into the faggot's apartment, cut his balls off, and Fed-Exed them to the network's producer. I'll let our guys up there know some idiot at Drama Channel re-ran it. Betcha they don't do it again."

Bob met with Georgia at least once a week in the Zombie Master's office to debrief her during her alleged "therapy" sessions, and in a sense, they were indeed therapeutic, although not for Bob so much. What Wallace was doing to her made Bob want to scream out loud and rip Wallace's face off with his bare hands, but what chilled him was the way Georgia seemed simply to accept it as a kind of sexual variety. He found it best to steer clear of the whole subject whenever possible. He and the Master concentrated on gently pumping Georgia, going over every minute of her days in the White House and getting from her everything and everyone she saw, heard, overheard, or simply sensed as a vibe.

The mine of information that could be obtained purely from someone wandering around the corridors of power was incredible. Within several sessions the WPB knew who on the Joint Chiefs of Staff was in charge of what aspects of Operation Strikeout, how many HE and bio-war missiles each submarine was packing (24 each, half targetable Cruises and half biological warheads), and at least half of the specific Army and Marine combat brigades that would be used in Groups North, Center, and South. They learned that the Americans had heard rumors of Bluelight, but that Kanesha Knight's alien obsession had turned the whole subject into something of a joke, and there was a tendency to write the whole subject off as a canard. Georgia could not pick up anything that indicated any concern as to the vulnerability of the American spy satellite network, and the Special Planning Group in Olympia took comfort in the fact. More importantly, they learned that Vice President Hugh Jenner and Admiral Hector Brava were not fully on board with the whole invasion, or at least its details, and they were regarded as Eeyores, to the extent that Wallace was seriously considering relieving Brava of his post and dropping Jenner from the ONI ticket at the convention.

Most importantly, at the end of one session, Georgia passed on something she had overheard from one of the stalls in the West Wing ladies' room, when Angela Herrin had stepped in to take a call from someone, and had referred to something called the Apocalypse Option. "What's that?" asked Bob

Georgia frowned. "Bob, I'm not sure—but I think it's a plan they have to use nuclear weapons against the Republic if things start going bad for the United States once the war begins."

"Holy Christ!" muttered the Zombie Master under his breath.

"Georgia, what exactly did the Herrin woman say? And do you have any idea who she was talking to?" Bob asked her urgently.

"No idea, but she lapsed into some funny language at times. Not Yiddish. I know the sound of Yiddish, Marvin babbles in it to his Jewish friends. Never heard it before, something with a lot of hisses and throaty noises like she was trying to hock a lugie."

"Hebrew," said the Master grimly. "Herrin is really Herrnstein, and she was born and raised in Israel. So she was speaking to another Israeli. Maybe even her real boss."

"Georgia, what did she say in English?" prodded Bob gently. "Every word, as exactly as you can remember."

"Okay, I think I can give it to you pretty much verbatim," Georgia responded. "She said, 'I've tried to get him to kick off with Apocalypse, not just hold it in reserve for a worst-case scenario, so we can kill millions of the Jew-hating schmucks right off the bat, but he's concerned the radiation will mess up Vancouver and get the Canucks all pissed off, plus he's worried it will freak out the *goyim* and fuck up his re-election. Yes, I've told him that. We control the voting machines and it doesn't matter what the hell the *goyim* really vote like, but he's worried about his legacy, that kind of dreck. I tried to get him on board with the expense aspect, told him it will cost too much and bankrupt the country to ship all the millions of racists to Antarctica, because we'll have to at least make some show of building them shelters and feed them something, shit like that, and since we're sending them there to die anyway, why not just fry their pig-eating asses and have done with it? But he keeps trying to play political angles. He's agreed to keep the Apocalypse card up his sleeve in case these stupid Pentagon *schmendricks* can't beat a few racist Davy Crocketts and their squirrel guns. I'll keep on pushing it." Most of it was in Hebrew, or whatever the language was. Oh, yeah, I remember one phrase she used when she hung up. Am Yiz Roll Kye."

"*Am Yisroel Chai*," said the Zombie Master. "It means 'Israel must live.' God *damn* them!"

"Georgia, I know I promised that we wouldn't ask you to fish for specific information, because it's so dangerous," Bob told her carefully. "But surely you must realize how important it is that we learn everything we can about this so-called Apocalypse Option. I won't ask you to put yourself at risk, just keep your eyes and ears extra wide open."

"We've got ten minutes left, Georgia," said the Zombie Master kindly. "I suppose I'd better use it to do what the government is paying me twelve hundred dollars an hour for. How are you holding up?"

"I'm scared all the time," she admitted. "I wish—I wish I could see you more, Bobby."

"I wish I could too, Peanut, but you're under Secret Service surveillance," he told her. "If I do more than drop off your smokes occasionally, they're going to wonder about me and start digging around."

"Keeping off the booze and the weed?" the shrink asked her.

"Yeah, although it's hard. I'm spending more time over at Mom's house. The nanny is a nice lady from Guatemala, and she lets me play with Allura. I know I have to do this for her, so she can Go Home and she won't turn into someone like me. That has to happen. Bobby, remember what you said about the old NVA asking for twenty-four hours when a Volunteer was caught, before he or she broke under torture? I've thought about it, and I think I can do it, for Allura. Promise me, Bobby, if I get caught, you'll use that twenty-four hours to get Allura away from there and take her home to Montana. It's too late for me, but not for her. Promise me, Bobby!"

"It's not too late for you, and you'll both Go Home," said Bob firmly.

"Yeah, and we'll live happily ever after."

"You will," he said with a nod.

"Bobby, that's the nicest piece of pure bullshit anybody ever said to me. You're sweet." She gave him a kiss on the cheek. "I mean it. Promise me. Allura goes Home, no matter what."

"I promise," he told her.

XIII

Close Encounter Of The Absurd Kind

(D-Day minus 3 days)

Follow your inner moonlight; don't hide the madness.
—Allen Ginsberg

On the warm and sunny evening of June 18, Bob Campbell was in full Chicago Richie mode as he delivered an ice cooler full of rib-eye steaks, chicken leg quarters, and Polish kielbasa to a frat house on the campus of American University and collected a paper bag full of cash in return. The consignment of forbidden flesh set the wealthy frat boys back over $20,000. Inflated Federal Reserve notes good only for rats to nest in, true, but twenty grand was still a pretty penny for a backyard barbecue.

Bob's special cell phone buzzed in his jeans pocket, the one he used for Operation Belladonna only. Bob moved out onto the sidewalk outside the frat house, stepped beneath a stately elm and flipped the phone open. He read a text message from Georgia Myers to her Jewish stepsister Talia Halberstam, Marvin's daughter from a previous marriage, a quasi-friend whom she had begun cultivating again at the WPB's request, and Marvin's. Now that she was working at the White House, even if only as a high-end hooker, Georgia was *persona grata* again in the family. Talia and she were getting very chummy, a Jewish BFF being an excellent cover for a Nazi spy.

Every text message that Georgia sent to her stepsister actually did go to Talia Halberstam's phone, so that if the Secret Service or DHS ever checked, they would find all the messages duly delivered and recorded there. Thanks to Birdie the criminal techie geek, who was making a

fortune off Vinnie Skins' business, text messages from Georgia's phone were double-transmitted on a different frequency sufficiently close to the phone's normal operating frequency to mask the fact, and were copied to Bob and Betsy both.

Georgia did not dare bring a disposable or other second device past White House security, in view of the questions it would provoke, so she had to use her own personal phone. In order to communicate with her handlers and remain undetected, Georgia had to compose a text to her stepsister which made apparent sense, but which contained hidden messages for the two Circus ops. In this case Bob read *"Hoi, Talya—How did Sherman recep go? Was Larry high whole time again?"* Bob had no idea who Larry was, and it didn't matter. The important things were the misspellings in the salutation. Misspelling Talia's name told them that Georgia wanted an emergency meeting, and the second misspelling indicated extreme urgency.

Bob used the Belladonna phone to call Betsy. Their two phones were programmed to break up transmissions between different cell relays, encrypt same, then bounce them off an old Euro-satellite from the 1990s stationed above D.C. that was still working, but which wasn't equipped for monitoring from earth. Nonetheless, conversations had to be kept short and cryptic. "Did you get that?" Bob asked her.

"Yeah," said Betsy. "Looks like Larry's been a bad boy again."

"Hey, sweetness, I feel like a bite to eat, and I don't mean food," said Bob lewdly. "Meet me at the Roller Derby?" Anyone listening would assume he was a client making a business date with working girl Betsy. The Roller Derby was a Georgetown nightclub, but in code, it referred to the actual proposed meeting place with Belladonna, which was a chew-easy on L Street, a Middle Eastern restaurant that paid the requisite bribes to the authorities so they could serve meat dishes to patrons. Kassim's Garden of Delights was a restaurant and bar with cameras inside, but none in the outdoor piazza eating area, which was discreetly accessible through a wrought-iron gate on L Street and also a rear alley. The owner was Abdel Kassim, born Sheldon Silverstein in Tel Aviv, who arranged for his garden tables to be unmonitored through the simple expedient of bribing his brother-in-law in the DHS. It was a popular meeting place for people in government and organized crime

who wanted a quiet tête-a-tête off the electronic record for assorted amatory, financial, or illegal pursuits, and Abdel/Sheldon surcharged accordingly.

"I can't make it," she told him. "I'm kind of tied up right now." This was SOP as well; both handlers never came to an emergency meeting.

Bob fought off the temptation to ask "Literally?" and instead he said, "Tell you what, I'll head on over there, and if you can get free, give me a call and we'll hook up," indicating he would take the meet at the kebab joint.

"You got it, stud," said Betsy, and hung up. She would pass the information on to Vinnie Skins that something serious had happened and Richie was going for an unscheduled meet with Belladonna. They were coming to trust Georgia's instincts. She was holding up better than they had expected, and if she thought something was important enough to break pattern, it probably was. Bob texted Georgia back, a pre-loaded spam text telling her that he was an exiled African head of state who urgently needed her bank account number, so he could split the fortune he had embezzled from the national treasury with her. This informed Georgia where the meet would be.

An hour later Bob was sitting at a table in the hot, muggy summer twilight under an umbrella in the outdoor section of the Garden of Delights, sipping an insanely overpriced imported beer and munching on artichoke and goat cheese *hors d'oeuvres* that may have born some vague resemblance to what people ate in some unspecified part of the Middle East. There were a lot of these Israeli-run Middle Eastern restaurants, and they were usually generic places like this that served the Tel Aviv equivalent of fast food. Bob saw Georgia slip inside from the L Street entrance. She was wearing a neat beige pants suit of the kind known to the fashion world as a Hillary, and she looked like any District civil servant or office worker out for dinner, except her beauty caught the eye of every man and many of the women in the place. It was always difficult for Georgia to remain truly inconspicuous. She strolled over and sat down with the scruffily dressed buttlegger type at the white wrought-iron table. Kassim's was well known as a place for

such incongruous meetings. "You okay leaving the White House in the middle of shift, if that's what you call it?" asked Bob.

"Hunter's at a diplomatic do at the U.N. in New York, and he won't be back until midnight," said Georgia. "They don't mind if I take a long lunch, so to speak, and I don't have to order up room service from the mess if I want to go out. I just take a lunch break like the other staff. I'm not in jail there; they just watch me like I was. I'm sure they're tracking me on camera, but you said this place was safe. No spy cameras."

"Yes, which is why your coming here may raise a red flag when they wonder where you've gotten to," said Bob. "You need to have a quick salad or something and go. What's up?"

"The government is going to kill Kanesha Knight and blame it on you guys," Georgia told him.

"What?"

"They're going to assassinate the head of the CIA," she went on. "That's the excuse they're going to use to invade the Northwest Republic. They're going to say you killed her. It's going to happen tonight."

Back in the White House, Secret Service Special Agent Lee Lyons got a call from Agent Victor Chan in the downstairs monitoring room. "Sir, you asked for anything unusual regarding FWOTUS's movements?" In the absence of a FLOTUS, a First Lady Of The United States, the Secret Service had adopted the codename FWOTUS to designate the woman in Georgia's job slot—First Whore Of The United States. It was strictly unofficial, but of course everybody in the White House knew it and was in on the joke, except for poor Georgia herself. She thought her Secret Service codename was the romantic-sounding "Moonstone."

"Report," ordered Lyons.

"FWOTUS went out for dinner, and she stepped into Shel Silverstein's kebab hole up on L Street," said Chan. "That's a dead zone."

"Yeah, I know," said Lyons. "We keep bitching and sending nasty memos to DHS, but for some reason they won't do anything about it. Silverstein's probably paying somebody off over there."

"She may be just eating falafel for supper," said Chan.

"Or she may be meeting somebody she shouldn't be," said Lyons. "Maybe she has a boyfriend she's still seeing, in violation of her contract, which would be understandable in view of—never mind. If we can catch her stepping out on POTUS, I can get her contract canceled early and get her lovely ass out of here. Check it out. Get down there and get an eyeball on her. If she's meeting somebody, stick with him or her, and let's get an ID on them."

"I'm on it, sir," said Chan.

Back at the kebab garden, the two of them were interrupted by a Mexican waiter who took their dinner order. Bob was pleased to note that Georgia eschewed wine or beer and ordered Afghan tea. When the waiter was gone Bob said, "Okay, give it to me from the top."

"We did seventh inning stretch early so Hunter could catch Air Force One up to New York, and after I got cleaned up I went up to the residence the back way like I usually do," Georgia told him. "All of a sudden the door to the cabinet room opens up ahead of me, and Janet Chalupiak and that big black Secret Service guy Jimbo Hadding come out and start walking down the hall together. They didn't see me behind them, and they're talking about Kanesha Knight getting killed in some kind of drive-by shooting late tonight. The word around the West Wing is that Hadding is Hunter Wallace's hit man when he wants somebody taken care of."

"Yeah, we've picked up on that elsewhere," Bob told her, nodding. "You need to be extra careful around him. What exactly did they say?"

"Well, I couldn't very well tiptoe up behind them and eavesdrop, but Chalupiak says for Hadding to make sure he's wearing a mask, but make sure the white guys on the team aren't, so the cameras will pick up on Kanesha and her bodyguard getting whacked out by white men. Then they'll photoshop the surveillance tapes to make sure the Secret Servicemen aren't identifiable, and change their faces to known BOSS agents."

"BOSS doesn't work outside the Republic, only WPB and CMI," said Bob.

"Maybe they don't know that, or don't care," said Georgia. "Anyway, Janet asked Hadding if he minded killing a black woman and her black

bodyguard if it would start the war that wiped out the Republic and killed millions of white racists, and Jimbo says, 'Fuck it, I kill anybody I tole to kill. I gits paid all de same.'"

"The noble African at his best," commented Bob.

"You wanted to know when the war was going to start," said Georgia. "Well, looks like this thing tonight will begin the countdown."

"Yeah, there will be a couple of days of ranting and raving and buildup in the media about us wicked Northwest racists, how dare we raise our hands to a Strong Black Womyn? How dare we even exist? Then they attack. *Jesus!*" swore Bob. He glanced up. The patio doors into the restaurant proper were open, and he looked right into the eyes of an Asian man standing at the bar in a dark, button-down suit and tie, who was looking directly at Georgia and him. The Asian's eyes flickered briefly and he looked away, his face expressionless. For some reason, Bob got a tingling chill in his spine, and he was suddenly certain that the man was watching them, and he was up to no good. Then he spotted the small earphone mike in the man's ear and he was sure of it. *Damn! She was followed here!* he thought. He quickly decided not to tell Georgia; he needed her calm and on point now, not rattled with paranoia. He took out his buttlegger phone. "Hang on. I need to set up a meet with my boss. He has to know about this right away."

"Your mysterious boss that I don't get to meet or know his name?" asked Georgia archly.

"That's the guy," said Bob. The waiter brought their food. He texted "Out of rotten blues & pearly whites, new business, need 5 and 3 units. Will watch for your call." Anyone intercepting the text that was familiar with the flesh and plant peddling business would assume he was asking Vinnie Skins for five cartons of British-made Rothman's filters and three pounds of chicken breasts. "New business" did not mean a new customer, it meant something urgent had come up, and *watch* for the call instead of *wait* for it let Cardinale know that Bob had reason to believe he was under physical surveillance. "Okay, Georgia, I want you to finish up your hummus or whatever that is, get up, smile at me in case you're on candid camera, and then I want you to go back to the White House. You just went out for dinner, is all."

"What are you going to do about the CIA woman who's going to get killed tonight?" asked Georgia.

"I don't know. It's not my call, but keep a sharp ear out over there and be ready to go for a therapy session with Doctor Jake tomorrow morning, even if it's not your regular day," he told her. "Things will start moving real fast now."

Georgia was a quick study in the espionage game, and so after finishing her plate of unidentifiable goo she stood up and left per instruction. Bob kept an eye on the Asian at the bar, and he saw him watch Georgia leave. The Oriental did not follow her, nor did he take out his phone. Bob started to wonder if he had been mistaken about the man. He ordered another beer and made a show of casually watching a niggerball game on his phone while he sipped, keeping a covert eye on the Asian, who seemed in no hurry either to leave. About half an hour later Vincent Cardinale and Duke dropped into the seats at his table.

"Where's the bad boy?" asked Cardinale.

"Gook in the dark suit by the bar," said Bob. "That guy's got cop written all over him, and I should know, because I'm one myself. He appeared about ten minutes after our lady rocked up and I'm convinced he was watching us. Plus his ear decoration."

"He forgot to take it out when he left the White House," said Cardinale. "I know him. He's a Secret Service agent named Victor Chan. Yeah, looks like you're now a made man, so to speak. Do you think he's reported back to his people yet? Has he used his phone?"

"Not that I've seen," said Bob.

"He stayed with you and didn't follow Belladonna. You're still sitting here and not getting dragged away to the cellars of the J. Edgar Hoover building, so that means they want to see who you are and where you go. Now they see us and make the buttlegging connection, the Secret Service will figure our lady is maybe just working an angle to peddle smokes in the West Wing or something like that. If we're lucky and the president finds her charms especially irresistible, she'll just get a warning to stay away from known criminals like you, you naughty boy. Tonight he'll follow you and see where you go, so just finish your route as usual, come back to Arlington, and let's hope to hell I'm reading this

right and we all of us don't end up in the torture cellars. Now, what was the emergency meet about?"

Bob ran down for them what Georgia had told him. "*Shit!*" said Cardinale under his breath.

"What do we do, boss?" asked Duke.

"This changes things. We have to at least *try* to stop that hit!" said Cardinale decisively. "I don't know if it will make any difference, but if we can blow the lid off and at least let people know it wasn't us but Wallace's goons cacking their own Sheba, it will take a lot of the wind out of their sails. I doubt they'll call off the invasion, but it will sure gum up the works propaganda-wise. But we have to get on it now. We have to figure out when and where and how it's going down."

"What about our inscrutable friend at the bar?" asked Duke.

"We can't have him following us around all night, considering what we'll be up to," said Cardinale. "Normally I wouldn't cack a federal agent due to all the repercussions, but in a matter of days we're going to be at war, and we're about to be up to our ears in repercussions no matter what. Looks like that flatface gets to be the first casualty of the Great Northwest War, or whatever historians decide to call it. One of theirs and not one of ours, which I hope is a good omen."

"The alley behind here is part of the dead zone," Duke reminded him. "My main Red Sea pedestrian Shel pays for that so his customers can park elsewhere or take the bus and come and go through a private door and stay off digital. Nearest cameras are on M Street. We need to get flatface out back and take him there."

"I'll do it," said Bob. "Don't worry, I'm up for it. You guys split, I'll finish my beer, and then I'll leave by the alley gate. He'll follow me out, since I'm the one he's interested in. I've got my buttlegger gun, I'll use it, then I'll break contact with the scene. I'll find someplace private to disassemble the weapon; I'll toss the pieces and meet you at one of the E&E points back in Virginia."

Cardinale shook his head. "Sorry to rain on your NVA fantasy, young Galahad, but we need to keep you clean and uncompromised if at all possible," he said. "You're here for one reason and one reason only, to run point on Belladonna, hold that lady's hand and blow in her ear, whatever you have to do to keep her functioning. No one is

ever indispensible, but right now, you're about as close as it's possible to get. Don't worry, Duke's got this. You got your Dear John?" Duke patted his shirt pocket, which seemed to contain nothing but a pen. "Okay, Duke and I are going to leave through the main restaurant, all very cheerful and *goombata*. We will be seen to leave on camera, and ching ling ding over there will be seen to remain in his seat, ignoring us and watching Richie, whom we hope to God he hasn't actually photographed and phoned in yet. Rich, you finish your beer, pay the waiter, and exactly five minutes from the time we leave the table, you leave by the alley gate and turn right toward M Street. We assume our spook gook from Sixteen Hundred will follow you. Do *not* step onto M, because then you will be on camera again and they will be able to place you in the alley. Just before you reach M Street there's a dumpster, and before the dumpster, there is an unmarked glass door. It will be unlocked. Go in and walk down the hall like you own the place, and ignore anybody you meet. Here's those five cartons of Rothmans you asked for," said Cardinale, slipping him a plastic bag under the table. "Put them in your backpack and if anybody challenges you, tell them you got some plant life for the guys in IT."

"What is the place?" asked Bob.

Cardinale chuckled, "It's the Washington *Post*, and as a matter of liberal courtesy the régime keeps their offices and street entrances free of surveillance. At the end of the hallway, you'll see another door that opens onto Fifteenth Street. I'll pick you up there. In the meantime, Duke will have taken care of that monkey on your back. Duke, when he's down you rob his ass, take his gun and his badge and his wallet, and above all make sure you *get his phone*. They probably won't buy that it's a street mugging, but we'll give it a shot. This is going to bring heat on Belladonna no matter what, but that's unavoidable now. Richie, you need to stay on top of her sitch over there. The minute she's in danger, we extract. Vital mission or not, that gal is a brave comrade, and I'm not handing her over to the Dershowitz needles if we can get her out in time. Duke, give me a call when you're done, and I'll pick you up on the fly in McPherson Square. Rich, you got all that?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," said Bob.

"Okay, your five minutes start now." Duke and Vinnie Skins got up and left the table.

Five minutes and a bit later, Richie/Bob pushed open the glass door in the rear of the Washington *Post* building and strolled down a long, cool, air-conditioned and carpeted corridor. To his left he could see through the glass walls a huge, busy and bustling newspaper office with desks and computers and a properly diverse cross-section of liberal yuppie humanity tapping on the computers. The *Post* was one of only about a dozen actual printed newspapers left in the United States, although their press run was subsidized by federal funds in the name of "American heritage." Other than New York and the District itself, the paper was virtually unobtainable throughout the country, since almost no one read newspapers anymore, but the *Post* and the Gray Lady, the New York *Times*, as well as the Wall Street *Journal*, were the official voices of the United States government and as such rated the dignity of the traditional printed page.

To his consternation, Bob saw one of his regular customers coming out of one of the men's rooms on his right, one of the *Post's* reporters. Harrison Hart was a harried-looking man in his thirties with a frizz of blond hair and glasses, and despite the air-conditioning, his short-sleeved yellow pastel shirt was soaked with sweat and his loose tie was drooping. "Richie!" Hart exclaimed. "Great! Just the man! I was going to give you a call. Got any butts on you?"

Bob knew he shouldn't stop, and he also knew that although he hadn't looked back, the Asian Secret Serviceman might be behind him and Duke might be about to shoot him or garrote him or whatever he was going to do right in the *Post* building, if he hadn't been able to intercept the fed outside. But blowing Hart off would be out of character for a pharmaceutical entrepreneur, and would cause his visit to be remembered. Bob looked around, and couldn't see anyone else in the long hallway, and so he motioned Hart back into the men's room. Once inside he said, "I'm on my way to a drop, but I got a spare carton of Rothman's I can let you hold for a couple of G-notes," he told the newshound.

Hart shuffled in his wallet. "All I have on me is a monkey," he said. "Can I owe you the rest?"

"Come on, Harry, you know that's not how it works," said Richie. "Cash on delivery. It's two hundred a pack. Tell you what, gimme the monkey and I'll give you three packs. Call it a good customer discount."

"You're a prince among men, Richie," said Hart gratefully, handing over the five hundred dollars. Bob tore open one of the cartons of cigarettes, handed Hart three packs, and pocketed the money. A minute later Campbell stepped out onto 15th Street and got into Vinnie Skins' late-model Lincoln, run on sinfully expensive premium gasoline instead of politically correct and even more expensive electric UPS. Cardinale was on the phone, which he closed as soon as Bob got in.

"Duke's done," he said. "Now we pick him up, and I try to think of some way to save a nigger's life. One of the things they don't teach you at Whidbey Island is how fucking ironic this job can get sometimes." Several minutes later, they spotted Duke lounging on a bench in McPherson Square. He got into the back. "Flatface get his Dear John letter?" asked Cardinale.

"Yeah. He was devastated," replied Duke. "In the alley, and I went out the same way I came in. Nothing on camera."

"What's Dear John?" asked Bob.

Duke took out the pen from his shirt pocket and handed it over the seat to Bob. "Ordinary ball point pen, to all appearances," he explained. "It even writes. Take both ends and rotate them in opposite directions. Yeah, like that. They come apart. Now put them back together but in reverse. See?"

"It's a little gun!" exclaimed Bob admiringly.

"Yeah. A single twenty-two-caliber long rifle hollow-point cartridge goes inside. Half a twist to the right to cock it, squeeze the clip-on to fire it. Of course you got to be at point blank range, and you have to hit a vital spot in the head, through the eye or the ear, or in this case the base of the skull at a forty-five degree angle. Best to use it like you would a knife, press it into the target's body and use his own flesh and bone as a silencer. That's how the Office writes somebody a Dear John letter." Bob handed the tiny weapon back to Duke.

"You get the gook's phone?" asked Cardinale.

"Yeah, I checked it out while I was waiting for you before I took out the chip and tossed it. Lot of Secret Service numbers and stuff we can send to the analysis unit back Home, and I found a photo of Richie and Belladonna, one of Richie, and one of us three together, but I checked his last outgoing calls and he didn't make any from the Garden. I don't think he transmitted the photos."

"The gods are watching over us, as always," said Cardinale with a sigh of relief. "Okay, now how do we stop this Kanesha Knight rubout?"

"First problem, maybe insurmountable, is that they know the when and where, and we don't," offered Duke practically. "If we have her private phone number and GPS we can do a trace."

"Or maybe just plain call her and warn her?" suggested Bob.

"And say what?" asked Cardinale. "'Hi, Kanesha, we're the wicked racists you're planning on exterminating, but we have a soft spot in our hearts for brown sugar, so we figured we'd tip you the wink that your boss is going to throw you under the bus, literally?' I don't even think we have her phone number. We try to keep up to date on data like that, but it's hard. CIA personnel are issued those souped-up satellite phones that actually acquire and use a different number for each call, like the old dial-up computers used a different dynamic IP address for every log-on."

"CIA headquarters is in Langley, Virginia, right?" asked Bob. "Maybe they're planning on killing her in her own office building, but Georgia said she specifically overheard reference to a drive-by shooting. They'll probably attack Mammy K between her office and home. Do we know where she lives?"

"Of course," said Cardinale. "In Southeast. Anacostia. But we don't know if she's going straight home. She may be working late, she may have some kind of social function or work-related meeting elsewhere, or she may be going to a nightclub to boogie until dawn," Cardinale glanced at his watch. "It's eight o'clock now. We have no clue where she actually is. Belladonna just said it would be tonight. It may be going down as we speak, dammit!"

"I notice Hunter Wallace is very noticeably out of town," said Duke. "As if anyone would think he needs an alibi. The guilty flee where no

man pursueth, and all that Shakespearean crap. That nigger Hadding is supposed to be his personal bodyguard. I wonder what excuse they'll come up with as to why he's not with his boss in New York?"

"Maybe Hadding is the key," said Bob slowly. "He's the only lead we have. He's the only individual we know who'll be in the right place at the right time. Any chance we could track him instead of the negress? Do Secret Service agents also get those special phones you talked about?"

"Their phones use special encryption, and their GPS is masked against anything we've got or anything Birdie's got," said Cardinale. "But his fucking FLEC card won't be masked! Duke, get Birdie on the horn and tell him we're coming over, rush job, money no object."

"Birdie's not Office," warned Duke. "He's just a player. We use him to track a federal agent, he's going to wise up to the fact that we do more than peddle cancer sticks and glazed ham."

Cardinale nodded. "I know, but this is an emergency. I may be overly pessimistic. We may actually be able to stop the whole fucking invasion if we prevent the ostensible *casus belli*. That means we have to give it a shot, no matter what the risk. Actually, if we can find out when and where, and we can interdict the hit successfully, I have an idea as to how we can turn this whole thing really to our advantage. But we have to get into the loop first. I'll talk to Birdie tonight. I'll tell him the bare minimum he needs to know, which is that we're gonna need his help like never before, but he doesn't get to ask question one. When it's over he'll have enough money to retire for the rest of his life, but if he rats us out we have friends who will douse him with gasoline, put a rubber tire around his neck, and touch a match to him."

George Byrd turned out to be a slender, geeky individual of indeterminate age who lived in the house he had inherited from his mother on a quiet back street in Arlington. Cardinale told Bob on the way over that the land on which the house stood was worth tens of millions of dollars, but Byrd refused to sell his childhood home and instead made his money the old-fashioned American way, by stealing it. Birdie's kingdom was in his basement, a huge bay full of computer equipment and electronic gadgetry that looked like a mad scientist's laboratory, which in a way it was. A few taps on the keyboard got

him into the Social Security database where he retrieved the SSAN for one James Roscoe Hadding, and from then on, it was child's play for someone who knew how to hack into any computer system in the world, which apparently, Byrd could. He established an uplink with a private corporate satellite that was used by the world financial industry for its own assorted spying purposes, and piggybacked onto Bank of America's system. Within a matter of minutes, he had located the said James Roscoe Hadding. "Got him," said Byrd. "Right now he's on basement level at sixteen hundred Pennsylvania Avenue, but on a wild guess, I'd say you guys knew that already. What the hell are you into now, Vinnie? Who is this guy?"

"He's a guy who's planning on giving us some problems, so we're gonna return the favor," said Cardinale. "You need to keep us posted on his whereabouts for the next few hours. Duke and I need to get going now, but I'll leave my man Richie here with you, in case you need any help."

"What kind of help? You matrixed?" asked Birdie.

"I don't even know what that means," replied Bob.

"It means you don't know shit about computers, IT, or telecommunications. So how can you help?"

"We're going to need you to follow this guy around for us, all night, and Rich here will pass the info on to me," said Cardinale. "Did I mention that money was no object? Here's a down payment." He tossed down a flat pack of thousand-dollar bills of enormous thickness that he pulled from his jacket pocket; it must have been a couple of hundred grand, at least. Birdie eyed the money but did not pick it up.

"You're going to whack a federal agent, or somebody politically connected enough to be hanging at the White House at this time of night," he said. "Not that I'm opposed in principle, mind, but something tells me I need to know what the itinerary is before I sign up for this cruise. So what the hell's going on?"

"Okay, I'll tell you," said Bob quietly, before Cardinale could say a word. "Never mind the money, Mr. Byrd. That's not what this is about, not for us, although don't worry, you'll get paid. I'll level with you: if any of us get caught, we're dead, including you. What we're going to be doing is illegal as hell, but it's not wrong. I don't know if you see

any difference in your own worldview, and if not, I'm not judging you, but that's the truth. We're gonna take a break from being criminals, and we're gonna be heroes for a while. I hope you'll join us. It may not make us much money, but it feels damned good. We're asking you to help save lives. Maybe millions of lives, of people like ourselves. Good people. I know some of them. White people. Men, women, children, like my wife and my children and my family back where I come from, who are going to be murdered because they have white skin and because they won't bow down to a dog. That's what the hell is going on."

"Yeah?" said Byrd, looking at them. Cardinale nodded. "You know, Vin, I always figured your crew was a bit sharper than was right for our little slice of life, and there was something going on below ground with you lot." He picked up the pack of bills. "Keep it. If you're from where I think you're from, I and my twinkling keyboard fingers are at your service, and there won't be any charge."

"Thanks, Birdie," said Cardinale.

After they left, Byrd said, "Richie, right? I remember I made your FLEC card. Not from Chicago, I daresay?"

"Nope," replied Bob. "Never been there."

"I'm sure you're here to keep an eye on me and maybe whack me if I crumple or turn rat on you. Fair enough. But I meant it." He nodded upward. "My mom died in the upstairs bedroom. She never moved out of it for eight years. She was on her way home from work one night when niggers threw her into a van and drove off with her. They dumped her three days later, after they were through with her. Besides all the usual stuff they did to her, she was beaten within an inch of her life, with crushed vertebrae in her spine that paralyzed her and put her in a wheel chair, and brain damage so she could never talk or think right again. I dropped out of MIT and I took care of her from then on."

"Why didn't you Go Home to the Northwest after she died?" Bob Campbell asked him.

"Partly because we're old Virginia people. Ever heard of William Byrd, the colonial plantation owner? Very famous. Historians used to write books and dissertations about his journals from the seventeenth century. I'm the last Byrd of Virginia, and I figured I should run out the clock here. But mostly it's because Mom left me this house, and if

I didn't live here the asshole developers would find some way to get hold if it, file an eminent domain writ or some such shit, use the law to steal my home like happens all the time in this country when the rich want what the poor have. Naboth had a vineyard, if you're into the Bible. That's why I need a heavy cash flow: I keep a team of lawyers on retainer just to fight off the corporations who want this little house, and they don't come cheap. They'd tear it down for condos or boutiques or some such shit. Then there would be nothing left of her at all, nothing she knew or touched, nothing that remembered her, if you get what I'm saying? I won't let her be extinguished by black animals, erased as if she never existed. I stay here so this house and I will still remember her together, and in the meantime I make it a point to do whatever I can to fuck up the system."

"You understand that things may get really dangerous, and they may find out?" asked Bob. "You may have to Come Home anyway, because you'll no longer have a choice if you want to live."

"Yeah, I get that," said Birdie. "Look, I'm not Norman Bates. I know she's dead, and at some point, it gets time to move on. This looks like it might be a good way to segue into a new time and place. Don't worry. I'm in. All the way."

Back at the Arlington warehouse, Cardinale quickly assembled a team of six men and two women, most of the wet workers attached to the D.C. station. He explained his plan to them. Betsy spoke up, "Uh, boss, all due respect and all that, but are you sure you haven't flipped your lid?"

"Maybe," admitted Cardinale. "Look, comrades, I know this makes the whole operation a lot more dangerous. One thing we learned back in the day is when you go in, you go in to kill quick and vanish. No frills, no conversation, no Three Musketeers swashbuckling, just get the job done and then break contact with the scene fast, before Fattie or the cops can react. I know this violates that basic principle. I suppose that logically, we should just go in and take out everybody, including the CIA mammy, make a clean sweep of it.

"But remember, we have a larger mission here, and there is a big picture. Kanesha Knight is an affirmative action employee these morons put into one of the most sensitive positions in their government for the

sole reason that she's got a pair of black knockers. One of our most vital tactics has always been to take out key people in the enemy régime and ruling class who either pose a direct threat to the Republic, or often someone whom our intelligence and political analysts predict *might* develop into a threat in years to come. Nip their asses in the bud. But there's a flip side to that. Sometimes an enemy individual is such a complete incompetent dipshit that it's actually better for the Republic's interests in the long run for them to remain where they are, and let them gum up the works from within.

"In my opinion, this applies to Mammy K. She believes we're in contact with *UFOs*, for Christ's sake! The Americans gave control of one of their major intelligence services to a kook for idiotic political reasons, and stupidity like that is a gift from the gods to us that we shouldn't waste. We need to make sure this black bitch stays where she is, but in a state of such complete paranoia and confusion that we can knock the whole Central Intelligence Agency out of the game, at least for a while, and force the Americans to deal with a major public embarrassment before they can get her out of there and get the CIA back up and running. Betsy, you'll be taking the most risk here, so if you have any doubts about it . . ."

"No, actually I think it will be a real hoot," she said with a giggle. "Hey, if that's the way you want to play it, I'll render an Oscar-winning performance."

"That is, if we can figure out when and where Jimbo is going to make his move," said Duke dubiously. "We don't know how many hostiles there will be or what the kill zone will be like."

"Duke, back in the day we used to call improvised tickles like that floats," said Cardinale with a grin. "Remember?"

"Yeah, I remember, and I also remember some Volunteers getting killed like that," replied Duke. "But it's not like we have any choice."

Cardinale pulled up a map on his computer. The NAR agents gathered around. "Three teams. June Bug, Frankie G., Rudolph, and Williamson are Red Team. You guys take the blue van. Tricia, Duke, and Little John are Gold Team. You get the SUV, the Mountaineer. Betsy, you ride with me in the red Dodge. The obvious problem is that we don't yet know where they're planning the ambush, whether it's in

the Green Zone itself or somewhere on the Virginia side. I'm gonna take an educated guess that it will be in the D.C. ESMA, because our intel indicates they plan to use some unmasked white shooters whom they will then photoshop with the faces of some of our own people back Home, in order to try and claim that we whacked Mammy Kanesha. This means that they will need to do it in some place they know is covered by CCTV, and surveillance over here isn't nearly as comprehensive as it is in the ESMA. I'm guessing again, when I assume it will be at her house, which is at this address here, in Anacostia. Yeah, I know, that's a lot of guesswork, and we need to be ready to change plans quick.

"We go over into the District across the Fourteenth Street bridge at five-minute intervals so we don't all go through the checkpoint at once. We drive to Anacostia, and then we run a parallel patrol through a twelve-block radius around her house, with one double back and one lateral slide per circuit. If you were absent that day at SoI on Whidbey Island, then get somebody who remembers the course to drive. It will fool whatever dozy cop or affirmative action nigger is monitoring the street cameras tonight, at least for a while. We'll have to assess the tactical situation on the fly, and guys, if it looks like we have to just waste these bastards without playing my merry little jest, then that's the way we roll. Psychological warfare is all very well and good, but I don't want anybody killed because I feel in a waggish mood tonight."

After more planning and going through projected possible scenarios, Cardinale issued his crew their uniform for the evening's festivities, black nylon jumpsuits and full motorcycle helmets with black-tinted face visors and rows of blinking green and yellow LED lights over the visor and around the back of the helmets. He also issued two of his men with special weapons, concussion and stun grenades and hand-held laser pistols of an experimental prototype the NDF's Technical Warfare Division had come up with and shipped to them, to see if the things were any good in the field. So far, Cardinale had found no practical opportunity to use them for anything. Betsy came back into the room wearing her costume for the evening, a long flowing white dress with a lot of sheer muslin drapery. "You look like Princess Leia," said June Bug, a scarred and tattooed 200-pound man with a grizzled beard.

"She's supposed to, up to a point," said Cardinale. "Remember, the idea is to leave CIA director Kanesha Knight alive but confused, and convinced she was rescued from an assassination attempt by space aliens." Cardinale's phone rang, and he flipped it open. "Yeah?"

"Monkoid on the move," said Bob Campbell on the other end.

"Okay," said Cardinale. "That's good, because we're ready to roll here. Let me know if he crosses into Virginia."

"You got it," said Bob. "I'll get back to you in a bit."

"Last-minute potty trips and then we mount up, people," called Cardinale. "The game is afoot, as Sherlock Holmes said. Follow me down to Rosslyn, then we circle for a while until we hear whether or not we go into the Green Zone. Everybody keep their phone headsets on conference with full encrypt. We'll probably have to say some things in the clear tonight we really shouldn't. Let's just hope DHS's techs haven't caught up to Birdie's genius yet." A few WPB agents hit the john, then they went down to their assigned vehicles, fired up the engines, and headed down Wilson Boulevard toward the Potomac. Betsy was driving the Dodge. Just as they rolled under the gleaming skyscrapers of Rosslyn, Cardinale got another call.

"He's stopped, looks like he's on foot, moving back and forth short distances," said Campbell.

"Setting up his ambush," said Cardinale. "Where?"

"Thirty Fifty-One Massachusetts Avenue Northwest," said Bob. "The South African Embassy. Our feathered friend here was able to zero in on Mammy's card as well. Apparently, the Company's FLEC encryption is out of date. They forgot to do their bimonthly switchover, or they just couldn't be bothered."

"Can he confirm she's on the premises?" asked Cardinale.

"Affirmative. Maybe she's attending some kind of cocktail party or reception celebrating the end of apartheid all those years ago, or something."

"No, I remember now, she's banging the nigger ambassador. Discovering her roots and all that crap. His root, anyway. Can our friend let us know when Aunt Jemima departs from the embassy?"

"He can," Bob assured him. "He's trying to hack into the DC Metro surveillance room now so he can access the cameras around and

inside the embassy, so we can get an actual visual and not just the blip from her card."

"Okay, we're on our way, and let's hope we don't get there too damned late. Keep me posted." Cardinale hung up and clicked conference. "Listen up, boys and girls. Looks like they're going to hit the target as she leaves the South African Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue. Mammy's limo will be either parked on the street or more likely in the embassy courtyard, which is accessed off Massachusetts through an electronically controlled iron gate. I figure our main monkoid will have at least three other shooters, so we'll extrapolate two hostile vehicles, both parked on either side of the embassy to box the limo in when they leave, and some kind of anti-tank weapon or explosive device to blow up or disable the limo and force Mammy out. This will be tricky, people, a firefight in the dark. We have night vision goggles and sights in our helmets, but so will they. We'll approach via Rock Creek Parkway, park our own vehicles on Thirtieth Street and Whitehaven Street, and enter the fire zone on foot. This is Embassy Row, people, more cameras per square foot than anywhere else in the District, so from the moment we park, we will be on camera and the clock will be ticking. Remember your E&E procedures we went over back at the house."

Thirty minutes later, at a little past eleven o'clock, the WPB vehicles were in place just off Massachusetts Avenue. "Don't get out until I say so, but be ready, helmets on, weapons locked and loaded," Cardinale told them on the phone. He himself pulled on his own mask, that of an extraterrestrial "Gray" from countless science fiction movies over the past half century.

Several minutes later, he got another call from Bob Campbell. "We're into the embassy visual feed to the DC cops. They're leaving now. She's in the courtyard and the driver's holding the door open for her."

"Can you cut the feed and blind the cops?" asked Cardinale.

Bob spoke briefly with Birdie on his end, then came back. "Yes."

"Do it, now." There was a brief pause.

"Done," said Bob. "They'll notice the outage, but you've got a few minutes before they react."

Cardinale got onto his conference. "Move out, now, stay low, and watch for the enemy shooters." He and Betsy exited their car. The whole WPB squad began moving northward across the well-trimmed embassy lawns of Britain, Brazil, and Bolivia. Ahead on the right side of the street, they could see and hear the iron gate to the inner courtyard of the South African embassy clattering open, and a long stretch limousine containing the CIA director and her driver slid out into the street. Simultaneously the doors to a car on the right side of the street opened and two white men in jeans and sweatshirts, unmasked, got out. Beneath the streetlights Cardinale could see that they were hefting Heckler and Koch MP5 submachine guns under their arms, ironically the same weapons that most of the Circus crew were packing.

Cardinale ran forward on tiptoe; the two Secret Service agents were so intent on their target in the limo that they didn't hear him until he was ten feet behind them. He shot one of them in the back of the head with the odd-looking laser gun from TWD, which resembled an LED flashlight with a pistol grip. The weapon zapped and smoked, and the federal agent dropped like a sack of potatoes. The second agent had quick reflexes: he whirled and gaped at what appeared to be a space alien in a suit aiming a ray gun at him, but managed to squeeze off a three-round burst from the submachine gun before Cardinale shot him in the chest three times, noting with pleased approval that the laser cut through the man's Kevlar vest like it was cardboard. But the gunfire gave the game away. *"Now! Hit 'em!"* he shouted.

There was an explosion up ahead; the second Secret Service team had expertly rolled incendiary grenades under the limousine as it reached the head of the embassy driveway, and the vehicle was enveloped in flames. It probably would have been safe to stay inside, since the limo in addition to being armored was fireproof, but instead of hitting the gas and getting the hell out of there like personal protection SOP dictated, the two negro occupants bailed out of the car in a wild panic. Cardinale could see his own men wearing the blinking motorcycle helmets, running toward the flaming car. In the poor light, they did indeed resemble weird interstellar robots of some kind. "Can you see the hostiles?" he shouted into his phone. "I got two of 'em down on this side!"

"Three standing this side!" shouted back Duke. Kanesha Knight and her black guard were running for the embassy front doors.

"Grenades!" yelled Cardinale, but it was unnecessary. The concussion and stun grenades were already flying through the air and landed at the feet of Kanesha and the driver. The grenades flashed and thumped the whole street, and the two of them collapsed on the embassy's broad front steps. Machine gun fire erupted up and down the street, muzzle flashes flickering like sheet lightning. Windows were lighting up in the embassy and black faces were peering outside. Cardinale turned around. "Bets, you still with me?"

"Yeah, but only because I talked you out of making me wear high heels," she said from behind him.

"Get those peeping coons away from the windows," he ordered. "We don't want anybody coming outside trying to drag our targets indoors." Betsy braced herself on the hood of a parked car, raised her own MP5 and methodically sprayed the windows along the front of the embassy with bullets, striking sparks and screaming ricochets off the stately stone façade. "Duke, how are we doing?" he said into the phone.

"Two white assholes down, sir," reported Duke. "The guy in the mask ran off. That must have been the nigger."

"You and Tricia take perimeter, everybody else close around like we talked about," ordered Cardinale. The WPB team appeared on the embassy lawn in the hot and muggy night, eerie figures in black, with weapons at the ready, cylindrical helmets blinking green and yellow, looking alien indeed in the pale light from the street lamps. One of the figures was walking slowly, leaning and cursing under his breath. "Who's that hurt?" demanded Cardinale.

"Me, sir," said June Bug. "Took a couple on the vest, bashed the shit out of my innards, but I'll live."

"You sure the other hostiles are all down? We don't want to be interrupted."

"Yes, sir, except for the nigger who ran like a bunny," replied June Bug. "One fool wasn't wearing a vest, and I damn near cut him in half."

Kanesha Knight and her CIA bodyguard, Arnold "Two Toes" Jefferson, were moaning and beginning to crawl to their feet. Jefferson was clawing inside his jacket for his gun. Cardinale walked over and zapped a laser beam through his nappy head; the monkoid collapsed and Cardinale kicked the gun away into the bushes. "Those things work, sir?" asked Williamson.

"Yeah, at close range," said Cardinale. "Wouldn't trust it much beyond forty feet or so, and the beam is about the width of a pin, so you really have to hit a vital spot. You ready, Bets?"

"Gimme a sec," she said. She handed her submachine gun to Williamson, and then pulled a thin latex mask out of her bra that she put on, another alien mask. Kanesha Knight rose shakily to her knees, shaking her head to clear her vision from the stun grenade. "Haul her ass up," ordered Cardinale. "She needs to pay attention to this." Two of the Office ops stepped forward, grabbed Kanesha's arms, and jerked her to her feet like a drunken Oprah. Cardinale gave her a good slap on her rubbery black jowls

"Okay," said Betsy.

"Showtime," said Cardinale. He drew an automotive flare from his back pocket and popped it, then Betsy stepped in front of it. The stunned and disoriented Kanesha Knight looked around, shaking her head trying to focus. She saw herself surrounded by what appeared to be robots with blinking lights on their heads, and an alien white woman with the face of an E.T. wearing some kind of toga or Greek goddess outfit, who was outlined in a bright and shimmering light.

"Huh?" said Kanesha.

Betsy raised her arms. "Hearken unto me, Kanesha Knight. I am the Princess Ha-Tonna, ruler of Alpha Centauri and emissary from the Quantum Lords of the Galactic Council," she intoned. "I bring you greetings from the Quantum Lords and a communiqué of great importance to your world. The individual known among men as Hunter Wallace is an evil being in the service of the Dark Potentates of the Crab Nebula. He has been sent to this planet to sow conflict and suffering among humankind, by starting a wicked and unnecessary war against the nation you call the Northwest Republic. It is the will of the Quantum Lords that this war must be prevented, and you, Kanesha

Knight, must bear witness to all the world as a messenger of peace and love and reconciliation. Go now, Kanesha Knight, bear our witness to Planet Earth, and impart to all of humanity the universal gesture of peace and perfect understanding."

"Say whut?" said Kanesha.

"I give it to you now, Kanesha Knight!" Betsy lifted her thumbs to her ears, extended her palms, and waved them. "In this sign shall you triumph, Kanesha Knight! End communication." Cardinale stepped forward and kicked Kanesha brutally in the solar plexus, knocking her to the ground, then threw the flare up onto the roof of the embassy.

"Alright, we're outta here," he told his crew. "Get to your E&E points, dispose of the vehicles and gear like I told you, and work your way back over the river by noon tomorrow. Let's go."

Back in the Dodge, Cardinale pulled off his alien mask, as did Betsy. "What the hell was that universal gesture of peace and understanding crap?" he asked. "That wasn't in the script."

"I just threw that in there," said Betsy. "I want to see if I can make her give herself monkey ears and flap them in public."

* * *

Hunter Wallace was not a happy president when he arrived back in Washington on Air Force One that night. Special Agent Lee Lyons met him at Andrews Air Force Base and informed the president that five Secret Servicemen were dead, four of them in the botched attempt on Kanesha Knight at the South African embassy, and one more, Victor Chan, had been found dead in an alley off L Street with a single small-caliber bullet in the back of his head, fired at close range. "Chan was robbed," said Lyons as they rode into the city in the presidential motorcade. His rage at the loss of his men was barely under control. "His wallet, his gun and his badge and his phone were gone, but I'm not buying it, sir. This was some kind of professional hit; my guess is by the same crew that came to Kanesha Knight's rescue at the embassy later."

"What the hell was Chan doing in the alley to begin with?" asked Wallace.

"He was checking up on FWOTUS—I mean your personal services assistant, sir," Lyons told him. "It was routine. She went out for supper and she stopped in a notorious deadfall on L Street, Shel Silverstein's Garden of Delights."

"Yeah, I know it," said Wallace. "I used to eat there a lot as a Congressman. Great doner kebabs."

"Kind of an odd coincidence, don't you think, Mr. President?" asked Lyons. "Ms. Halberstam drops off the grid for an hour, the man I send to check on her ends up dead in a hit that reeks of a pro job, and then a few hours later we get this fuckup on Massachusetts Avenue, with a full-armed squad of very proficient gunmen rising up from the earth just in time to shoot our men all to hell, save the target's ass, and then disappear?"

"You think Georgia Halberstam tipped off somebody on the Knight termination?" asked Wallace skeptically. "And how would she know about it? I know what you're thinking, Lee, but I don't talk business with Georgia or any of my PSAs, not before, during, or after. I'm not that stupid. You clock all her movements around the White House every minute she's there. Has she ever done anything suspicious? Listened at the keyhole in the Situation Room? She's never even been down there, and her access card won't let her into the Cabinet Room or anywhere else important. Any hard grounds for suspicion, other than the fact that she was born in Montana?"

"No, sir," conceded Lyons sullenly.

"You handled her vetting. You find anything besides a lot of drunk and stoned wild-child crap in school? Anything political or racial at all?"

"No, sir," said Lyons.

"The existing system was designed to make sure that even if somebody ever did slip a Mata Hari on me, she couldn't learn anything important."

"I know, sir," said Lyons. "But I've got a job to do . . ."

"I know, Lee," said Wallace. "Look, the fact is, I really like this girl, and I'd like to get her to extend her contract. I'm not saying don't do your job, just don't get sidetracked unless you have some real evidence against Georgia. Keep on the Chan thing, by all means, but you know,

it could be a simple street robbery after all. A well-dressed man in an alley might present a tempting target for some hufflepuff looking for money to buy a pack of smokes. I'm not downplaying the loss of one of your guys, Lee, but this mess at the embassy is the important thing to concentrate on. You say Jimbo survived?"

"He took the better part of valor, sir," replied Lyons dryly.

"And so he should have done, or we'd have no fucking idea at all what happened," said Wallace. "What *does* Jimbo say happened?"

"He said he and his team were attacked by space aliens, Mr. President," said Lyons through tight lips.

"What?"

"He says they were robots with blinking lights on their heads, and he says he also saw a female alien wearing a wedding dress," Lyons informed him, deadpan. "Kanesha Knight says the same thing. She says the female alien was a princess from beyond the stars who gave her a message for planet Earth."

"Holy mother of pearl!" muttered Wallace. "Do you think your men were killed by E.T.s?"

"Bullshit!" said Lyons succinctly. "Space aliens don't carry automatic weapons and stun grenades. The FBI extracted nine-millimeter slugs from the bodies that their ballistics lab says are from MP5s, not the ones our guys were packing, so they didn't shoot themselves. It's true that three of the casualties were killed by some kind of laser, but we're working on weapons like that ourselves."

"So who could pull something like this off?" asked Wallace.

"You never fought the NVA, Mr. President, or you'd know the answer to that," said Lyons. "I was a Federal Anti-Terrorist officer in Spokane for two years, sir. The goots used to hit us like this every damned week. These motherfuckers were WPB or CMI or some kind of special squad out of the NAR. They knew we were hitting the Knight woman tonight, and they knew why, and they decided to monkey-wrench us. They know about Operation Strikeout, and my guess is when our military moves on the Republic, they're going to be ready and waiting for us."

"What rank were you in the FATPO, Lee?" asked President Wallace.

"I was a captain, sir. Two years in Spokane, and then I was in Portland with Delmar Partman."

"Not a general, then? Not qualified to advise the commander-in-chief on strategy and other big-picture stuff?"

Lyons had finally had enough. "No, sir. Just a soldier who has fought these men before. Just someone who can tell you from personal experience that if you underestimate the Northmen, the United States will pay in more blood than you can imagine."

Wallace was silent for the remainder of the ride back into Washington.

Owing to the late hour of his retiring, President Hunter Wallace gave orders that he was not to be awakened until nine a.m. on June 19, but at eight, his bedside phone rang. He woke up and picked up the phone. "Yes?" he said groggily.

"It's me," said the voice of Angela Herrin. "Turn on CNN."

"What?" asked Wallace. "Why?"

"That *meshugah schvartzer* Kanesha Knight!" screamed Herrin in rage. "That shitskinned bitch! She's on TV making a fool out of herself and fucking our whole pooch right up the ass, God damn her! Turn on fucking CNN *now!"*

"Okay, okay." He set the phone receiver down and fished around on his nightstand for the television remote. Beside him, Georgia stirred sleepily.

"Morning, handsome," she said. "What's up?"

"Angela's got her panties in a twist about something," said Wallace grumpily. "You seen the remote?"

"Don't you remember what you were doing with it last night?" she giggled. "Where did you put it? Hey, babe, I'd kind of like a cigarette. You mind?"

"What?" he asked. "Oh, yeah, sure." He took a key off his nightstand, reached over and unlocked the handcuffs behind Georgia's back. She rubbed her wrists and fished a pack of cigarettes and a lighter out of her purse on her own nightstand, and lit one while Wallace groped around on the floor beside the bed. He found the remote and clicked on CNN. He saw Kanesha Knight's chocolate face on the screen. She looked dazed, disheveled, and possibly drugged, her eyes

puffy and her normally exquisitely coiffed and straightened hairdo was frizzed out, giving her a wild, Buckwheat look. The tag line read, "CIA Director Kanesha Knight" and the kicker read, "Talks About Last Night's Assassination Attempt."

Her enunciation was even more clear and elegant than usual. "I have been appointed by the Quantum Lords of the Galaxy to deliver the message of Princess Ha-Tonna of Alpha Centauri, and I speak now to President Hunter Wallace. He must immediately cease his plans to invade the Northwest Republic. Instead, we must win the hearts and minds of the Northwest racists. We must approach with the universal gesture of peace, reconciliation, and perfect knowledge." Kanesha Knight then held her thumbs up to her ears, opened her palms, and waved them. She looked like she had monkey ears.

"Jesus Christ on a raft!" screamed Wallace in horror. He picked up the phone. "Angela, what the *fuck?*"

"She checked herself out of the hospital, and she's holding her little press conference in the parking lot,"

"Well, *do something*!" Wallace demanded of his press secretary.

"I did," snarled Angela. "I dragged Judge Weinberg out of bed and I got him to sign an involuntary committal order on her, and I just faxed it over there. I'm sending the U.S. Marshals to grab her and get her ass over to St. Elizabeth's—oh, okay, looks like the hospital got the committal order." Wallace looked at the screen. The director of the Central Intelligence Agency was now fleeing down a row of parked cars, pursued by two burly young men wearing white coats. The assembled media crews were pelting after them, and the picture was jumpy and confused, but every now and then Kanesha turned and waggled her palms beside her ears at her pursuers.

"Sweet Jesus!" moaned Wallace. "Now what?"

"The cat's out of the bag, Hunter," said Angela Herrin. "Call the Joint Chiefs and tell them to initiate Operation Strikeout, right now! The Nazis have been warned now, and we have to move fast!"

"Yeah, looks like we have no choice." Wallace hung up and dialed the phone. "This is the President of the United States," he said to the Pentagon. "Track down Admiral Brava and get him on the phone to me, *now!"*

"What's up, babe?" asked Georgia, laying back on her pillows and dragging on her cigarette. "That Knight woman sounds like she's cuckoo for cocoa puffs. What was she saying about invading the Northwest Republic?"

"Well, I suppose there's no harm in mentioning it, since now everybody in the whole goddamned world knows," said Wallace in a sullen rage. "Unless you already know because you're a spy. Lee Lyons thinks you're a spy for the Northmen. Are you?"

Georgia gave a silvery laugh. "Yeah, I know, Agent Lyons is paranoid about me because I'm from Montana. No, Hunter, I'm not a spy, and if I was, I wouldn't be a spy for the same bastards who broke up my family. I hate them. I explained that to Lee, but he probably didn't believe me. That's cool. It's his job to be suspicious of everybody. Now France, *them* I might spy for, so I could go and live in Paris afterwards." The phone rang and Wallace picked it up.

"Admiral Brava?" he said. "You saw that lunacy with Kanesha on CNN? Well, then, you know why I have to tell you to initiate Operation Strikeout right now. What do I mean by right now? I mean five minutes ago. Yes, well, readjust your damned schedules. Jesus Christ, man, it's only two days early! Use computers if it's too hard for your clerks or whoever to do it in their heads! That's what they're for. Yes, I know they're not in position yet, which is why you have to get a fucking move on and *get* them into position. So what if it's in the daytime? The planes will be thirty thousand feet in the air, and don't give me that horse shit about how the Nazis have got ray guns! Christ, man, you're sounding as crazy as Kanesha Knight with her aliens!"

While Hunter Wallace argued and expostulated and shouted at the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the phone, Georgia rolled over in bed, fished in her purse for her cigarette pack, and came up with both the pack and her phone in her hand. Shielding the phone from Wallace's view with her bare back, she texted out a message. Like all American girls, in her teenaged years Georgia had acquired the skill and dexterity to enter long and complex text messages quickly and accurately, and it stood her in good stead now. *Hey, Talia, want to catch a late breakfast? I feel like some green eggs and ham. Oh, sorry, you don't eat ham, do you? Just the green eggs for you, then.*

Two minutes later Bob, who was sitting in an Arlington diner with Vinnie Skins and Duke and Betsy, heard his Belladonna phone beep, and Betsy's did the same. They opened their phones. Cardinale looked up and saw Betsy staring at the phone with tears welling from her eyes. "What is it?" he asked.

Bob held up his phone. "Green eggs and ham," he said dismally.

Cardinale buried his face in his hands. "We've failed," he said in an exhausted voice. "This is what we were supposed to prevent. It's why they call us the War Prevention Bureau. It's the whole reason we exist, and now we've failed!"

* * *

"He's insane!" shouted Brava in the emergency meeting of the Joint Chiefs in the bowels of the Pentagon. "How is it that somebody who can wrap those yea-saying leeches in Congress around his little finger can't wrap his mind around the basic facts of logistics? How is it that somebody that smart doesn't grasp the fact that real war is not a computer game, and that moving hundreds of thousands of men, vehicles, aircraft, and all their equipment is not something that can be done with the click of a function key?"

"Did the commander-in-chief give us an order or not?" said buzz-cut Marine Corps Commandant Louis Battaglia. "If he gave us an order to move two days early, then we move two days early. It's that goddamned simple. It's the Delmar Partman way. It's the Marine way." Nobody bothered to remind the jarhead that Partman had been defeated and killed while mutinying and disobeying an order from his commander-in-chief.

"The first and second bomber groups are ready at Minot, and we can launch the third and fourth groups directly from Wright-Patterson in Ohio within an hour," said Bellows from the Air Force.

"That's the B-Fifty-Twos, right?" asked Brava.

"Check," confirmed Bellows. "Third and fourth wings have already got their ordnance payloads loaded on board, and they were just about to lift off for dispersal to their forward fields at Buckley in Colorado and Campo Maldonado in Aztec Nevada. It would be simple enough

to have them make their first mission runs over the NAR, sorry, the racist entity, and then return to those fields. Plus we can hit them with the Tomahawks on a few hours' notice."

"What about the Stratofortresses' fighter cover?" asked Brava.

"Not necessary," said Bellows confidently. "The enemy don't have any real fighters except some jerry-rigged civilian jets that are no match for a Fifty-Two, and I think the alien ray gun story is crap. It's Nazi disinformation, is all. This will be a milk run. A lot of milk runs."

"Task Force Soaring Eagle is still off southern California," said Brava. "They can launch their planes and missiles from further out, I suppose, but it's still going to take some time to get them within optimum range of the enemy coastline while still staying out of range of those damned Russian missile batteries on shore. We calculated all our fuel and other requirements based on kickoff at oh-one-hundred hours on June twenty-first, to make sure we hit the bastards in the dark for psychological warfare purposes. General Scheisskopf?"

"The three main invasion columns are now in the process of coalescing in eastern Montana, as Operation Blast Furnace transmogrifies into Operation Strikeout, like Desert Shield did into Desert Storm," Scheisskopf reported. "Combined Group North was scheduled to begin crossing into Canada at twenty-two hundred hours tonight. We can speed things up, I suppose, although it will still give the Jerries a lot more warning time than I'm happy with. But Battaglia is right. An order from the commander-in-chief is an order. How about our gallant allies from the Latin world?"

"I will telephone El Presidente as soon as we finish here and tell him we're moving early, and could he oblige us by moving up his country's own assault from the south?" said Brava with a scowl.

"And what reason will you give him?" asked Scheisskopf. "That our director of Central Intelligence experienced a psychotic breakdown because an assassination attempt scared her shitless, and she went on worldwide TV babbling about messages from a princess from Alpha Centauri, and at the same time blabbed out the secret of the most hush-hush American military operation since the Normandy invasion? And that our commander-in-chief jumps whenever his press secretary says frog?"

"I think the Jefe will know all that," said Brava dryly. "They do get CNN in Aztlan, you know."

* * *

Hunter Wallace was not the only president who was awakened by an early morning phone call, although it was only a bit early, since State President Morehouse of the Northwest American Republic in Olympia usually got up at 6 a.m. anyway. He picked up his bedside phone. "Yes?" he said.

It was Frank Barrow, Minister of Security. "Red, I just heard from Charlie Randall, who in turn just heard from our man in D.C., and he just heard from Belladonna. It's green eggs and ham, sir. They're coming, two days early. Hunter Wallace has scheduled a worldwide telecast for noon EDT, so we figure the first bombers will be on their way in a couple of hours."

"Thanks, Frank. Plan 17 is in effect as of now. Alert Doctor Cord and tell him we need to prepare to hit them with Rotfungus, and tell John and Carter to begin the reserve call-up."

"Already done, sir," said Barrow.

"Good. Can you track down Charlie and ask him to give me a call?"

"Will do, sir." Barrow hung up. Morehouse got out of bed, pulled on his robe, and walked down the hall in Longview House to one of the guest bedrooms. His secretary, Ray Ridgeway's daughter Annette, and her husband, one of his aides-de-camp named Colonel Eric Sellars, were staying in the presidential mansion to be close at hand when he needed them. Their children were already in one of the designated safe areas for the families of top government and Party people. This was not the matter of privilege it might have seemed; the Republic's leadership had to have their minds as clear and free of worry as possible, and the Americans were notorious for victimizing and retaliating against the families of those they hated. Morehouse knocked on their door. "Annette? Eric?" They opened the door. Eric Sellars was in PT shorts, and Annette pulling on a nightgown.

"Good morning, Mr. President," said the youthful colonel. During the War of Independence, he and his wife had been teenaged NVA

Volunteers with the Party's intelligence apparatus, the Third Section. [See *The Brigade*]

"Good morning, Eric." Morehouse said. "Sorry to get you up so early, but it looks like the Americans have jumped the gun on us. We need to get up to Fort Lewis right away."

"They're coming?" asked Annette.

"The bombers are probably already in the air. Annette, I hate to ask, but could you go to the kitchen and whip up some sandwiches real quick? We don't know when we'll get a chance to eat."

"Yes, sir," she said.

Back in his own bedroom, Morehouse was pulling on his own clothes when the phone rang. He answered it. "Hey, Charlie. Green eggs and ham, is it?"

"I'm afraid so, sir," said the Australian.

"You got that from Belladonna?"

"Yes, sir," said Randall.

"Is she all right? How exposed is she?" asked Morehouse.

"There was an incident last night. One of their goons was following her and Cardinale had to take him out. I'll give you a full report when I see you up at Lewis. They may be onto her, but our lads pulled off a neat little hat trick last night that I hope will distract them. Ever seen a CIA director lose her marbles on worldwide telly?"

"I beg your pardon?" asked Morehouse.

"Turn on the news before you leave and check it out," said Randall with a chuckle. "I asked Cardinale about Belladonna and as of eight this morning eastern time she was still in the presidential sack. He says she's holding strong and keeping her cool."

"Tell Vince that the very second she looks to be in any danger, extract her and get her and that baby somewhere safe," said Morehouse. "We may be about to lose everything, and maybe we can't prevent that, but we can damned well prevent those monsters from getting hold of at least one more white woman to torture and degrade. I remember what they did to Cathy Frost."

"So do I, sir," said Randall.

* * *

At 0945 hours Rocky Mountain time, Major Edwin Browder of the United States Air Force, and his fully armed and loaded B-52 Stratofortress bomber out of Wright-Patterson AFB, became the first hostile American aircraft to cross into the Northwest Republic's airspace, somewhere over Deer Lodge Pass, Montana. They were headed for Missoula along with the rest of Flight 95, a total of six B-52s whose mission was to reduce the city to rubble with bunker-buster and incendiary bombs. Specifically, they were to level the University of Montana and its pioneering scientific research and development facility, where for the past twelve years flocks of eggheads and science geeks and inventors had been working on all kinds of projects, everything from studying the true biology and genetics of race, which was forbidden everywhere else in the world, to allegedly making secret weapons out of supposed extraterrestrial technology, if the CIA could be believed. In an interesting bit of irony, their bombing run on UM would almost certainly involve destroying or damaging the house on Daly Avenue where Georgia Myers had lived as a child.

"ETA to target fourteen minutes," said the navigator in Browder's headphones. "Any bogies or flak yet, sir?"

"Nothing at all," laughed Browder. "What are these peckerwoods gonna do? Catapult a grizzly bear at us? The few planes they have are prop jobs, for Christ's sake! Don't worry, guys, the only thing we have to be concerned about is how good the chow hall will be down at Buckley. We'll drop our load and be there in time for lunch."

A strange blue light flickered up through the cloud cover, but the sun at 30,000 feet was so bright that Browder wasn't even sure he had seen anything. "What was that?" he asked his co-pilot.

"What was what, sir?" replied Captain Isfahani, an Iranian-American.

"Nothing," replied Browder with a shrug. But then it came again, a thin pencil of blue light that appeared and disappeared in front of him. "No, that! Did you see it?"

"Sir, looks like we've got some kind of enemy radar tracking system locking on to us," said Isfahani, pointing to one of his instruments. "It may be anti-aircraft. Should we launch . . . ?

Then the aircraft was struck at the speed of light by a high-energy plasma ray, energizing all the subatomic particles it came into contact with, be they air or metal or human flesh, and channeling those particles all into a one-directional flow along the line of the beam. It sheared off the port wing of the B-52 like scissors cutting a sheet of paper in half. The overbalanced aircraft went into a spin at six hundred miles per hour and plummeted toward the ground. The centrifugal force caused the entire crew to black out, and so they were unconscious when the plane hurtled into a mountainside in the Beaverhead Forest. Within forty seconds, all five of the other B-52s were falling out of the sky in flames and pieces. Georgia's childhood home was safe for now.

* * *

At noon Eastern Daylight Time, President Hunter Wallace addressed the nation from behind the desk in the Oval Office. He looked grim yet elegant in his Armani suit. "My fellow Americans," he said. "Almost eight years ago, you did me the honor of electing me to the highest office in the land. You did so on the strength of my promise to you that I would bend every effort of my being toward the sublime goal of righting a cataclysmic error of history that has shattered our beloved country and shaken the very roots of democracy. I refer to the loss of three and a half states of this indivisible union of ours to a racist military dictatorship controlled by a murderous criminal conspiracy . . ."

From the NAR command center at Fort Lewis, President Henry Morehouse and the full Council of State were watching the address. Morehouse had a phone in his hand. "Initiate Rotfungus," he ordered. He set down the phone. "Right, comrades, the upload has begun. I am told that this should take about ninety seconds, and then we will know whether or not we have a chance to win this thing on a level playing field."

On the screen, President Wallace was droning on. "Throughout the entire history of this country, we have had a problem with hatred. Racism and sexism and homophobia have been the curse of American society. These evils have stained this country's past and they stain its present, but I have come here today, my fellow Americans, to tell you

that stain is about to be erased for all time. This morning I gave the order to all branches of the United States military to . . ."

The screen froze. Hunter Wallace sat behind the desk, caught with his mouth wide open, like a big-mouthed bass snared by a fishhook, and a soundtrack that consisted of a barking little dog, possibly a Chihuahua, filled the room. "What the hell is that?" asked Morehouse.

"It's kind of a screen-saver for Rotfungus," said Frank Barrow. "It tells us that the virus is still active and functional. It also resolves for all time the question of whether or not Doctor Joseph Cord has a sense of humor. He does, sort of. From now on every time anybody on earth turns on their television set, unless they're in Russia or serviced by Russian satellites, or unless they have direct cable access, they will see and hear Hunter Wallace barking at them. Since most cable services rely on satellite feeds as well for various programming, that's going to cut down American television viewership considerably. The whole country will probably go into withdrawal."

"Any word on Bluelight, Bill?" asked Morehouse.

"The bad news is that it's not one hundred percent effective," reported Air Marshal Basquine. "There were some unit malfunctions and our techs are stretched, flying all over the eastern frontier trying to troubleshoot and debug them. There were some bomb and missile strikes within the Republic in Spokane, Boise, Kalispell, and some of the military targets. There have been a couple of dozen casualties that we know of so far. The next bit of bad news is that the bombing wave from the naval task force hasn't hit the west coast yet." Basquine took a deep breath. "The good news is that the first wave of bombers took something on the order of eighty percent casualties, with over four hundred enemy aircraft down, and a number of those who escaped did so because they panicked when they realized their planes were going down all around them, and they simply dumped their bombs, turned tail and ran. We think some of the hits around the east may not be actual bombs or Cruises, but falling debris from the destroyed enemy aircraft, and frankly, there's not much we can do about that. Basically, Mr. President, Bluelight works. We have broken American air power!"

Cheers and applause rang out in the room from the assembled ministers and officers. "And it appears that Rotfungus has worked as

well," said Barrow with a smile, nodding toward the television screen where Hunter Wallace still barked. "Our own sky is no longer our enemy. The bastards are still coming, but this time they're going to have to fight us blind and on foot, hand-to-hand, man-to-man. And whenever Americans try that, they lose."

XIV

D-Day

(June 19th—12 years, seven months, and 27 days after Longview)

"The great questions of the day are not decided by speeches and majority votes, but by blood and iron."
—Otto von Bismarck

The air raid sirens went off in Missoula, Montana, at around nine forty-five on the morning of June 19, but the civil defense radio and television had been warning the citizens of the Republic for several hours beforehand that the long-awaited American invasion was on its way. There was no panic. The streets were a hive of orderly and purposeful activity as all but essential personnel evacuated the city and went to their assigned military or civil defense posts or other SRPs, Secure Retrenchment Positions, where they would hopefully be out of immediate danger and they could not only survive, but keep NAR society functioning. The Northwest Republic had been preparing not just its military, but its people for this event for many years. Virtually every adult citizen had some kind of part to play in Plan 17.

The public call for reserve mobilization had gone out early that morning, but many of the military reservists for Missoula County were already in uniform and with their units in various places around the country. The call-up had in fact begun months before, covertly and in small numbers, with selected reserve units being activated on a variety of excuses for "special exercises," firefighting, equipment inspection or some other pretext, and then not sent home but kept on active duty.

A more extensive callup throughout the country had begun almost a week before, but quietly and without public fanfare, the citizen soldiers

being notified by telephone and personal contact. Over the past three months, the NAR had managed to mobilize almost a million men, get them under arms and into the field without the Americans picking up on it, a testimony not only to the enemy's lack of human intelligence on the ground throughout the Republic, but also to the limitations of satellite surveillance. Most of the Republic's major weaponry, aircraft and helicopters, artillery and tanks, and the few precious batteries of Russian-made missiles the country had been able to afford to buy, had been dispersed and was now in position. Large numbers of inflatable dummies and a lot of apparently motiveless troop movement back and forth across the landscape had added to the confusion of the American intelligence analysts, many of whom were negro or Third World affirmative action employees who were poorly trained and had little aptitude for the task. In cubicles in the Pentagon and at Langley, they peered at the blurred satellite footage half the time without any idea what they were looking at.

The Americans were already beginning to trip over one solid and inescapable biological fact: the races of Mankind are *not* in fact equal in cognitive intelligence and reasoning capacity. White people really *are* the sharpest knives in the drawer.

The University of Montana's chancellor, Jason Stockdale, had reverted to his reserve military rank of colonel on receiving his mobilization orders. He was now on the staff the NDF's Fourth Army, the force responsible for squaring off with the American Combined Group South of army, marines, and air force that was expected to cross the border within 48 hours. The Fourth Army was led by Major General A. J. Drones, an NVA veteran who had been the commandant of the Missoula Brigade during the War of Independence; it would not have seemed right for Jason to outrank him. To the north, the Second Army under Major General Zack Hatfield of Oregon Wild Bunch fame was covering the Flathead region of Montana out of Kalispell, and preparing to confront the enemy's Combined Group Center, while the Third Army under SS General William Jackson was centered on the Coeur d'Alene and Spokane areas, preparing to repel Group North coming down from Canada. The First, Fifth, and Sixth Armies were deployed in Oregon and Idaho, along the Republic's southern borders

with California. Utah, and Nevada, to deal with the Mexicans who would be invading the country from Aztlan. The Seventh Army under General Conrad Baumgarten waited in the wings in Wyoming, poised to launch an attack on the enemy's left flank.

All of this looked very neat and logical on paper, as if the war was laid out like some kind of board game, but this was not the case. In actual practice, it was as the American general Scheisskopf had predicted: the invaders would not be confronting one or two large concentrated forces that could be designated by flags or pins on a map, but hundreds of smaller ones that would nip at their heels like a pack of wolves chasing caribou.

Alone among the Northwest ground forces, the Special Service or SS was formed into divisions. The regular army was based on the older formation of the regiment, comprised of self-contained and self-supporting battalions, all of which were now at full strength, or would be within a matter of days. Certain regular regiments of professional soldiers, such as the International Brigades, which consisted of such outfits as the German Panzer Grenadiers, the Scots Guards, the Irish Guards and the French-speaking Régiment Charlemagne, etc. had no reservists. They moved and fought with their three battalions only, all together in a unit, small enough to move quickly and large enough to strike like a hammer. With support personnel a regiment of regulars only, *sans* reservists, mustered almost two and a half thousand men apiece.

The headquarters column of each army consisted of a core force of between twenty and twenty-five thousand men, most of them regulars. The headquarters column was the hive, so to speak, while the battalions were the bees. All of the strength was spread out over the landscape for miles, so never was there any huge concentration of men and materièl for the Americans or the Mexicans to attack, from the air or otherwise. Even had they maintained their satellite surveillance and air superiority, the Americans would have found it difficult to inflict debilitating casualty numbers on the NDF. The overwhelming number of NDF regiments of the line were comprised of their three regular battalions and at least six or seven each of reservists, on the average about 5500 to 6000 men per regiment. (Scheisskopf's estimations had been high,

another example of poor U.S. intelligence combined with WPB disinformation.) The battalions moved, billeted, and fought separately, although often brigaded together into perfectly coordinated and highly trained regimental strike forces.

Finally, like jokers in a deck of cards, there were the three élite Special Service Divisions of twenty thousand or so men each—the Viking Division, the Florian Geyer Division, and the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler. The SS division of handpicked men, each trained to the level of an American Green Beret and beyond, was an army on its own, with their own armor, artillery, and air wings. Even the Pentagon's generals admitted (out of range of the president's eavesdropping devices) that the SS were arguably the finest infantry in the world, albeit so far untested in full-scale battle. The three SS divisions were poised just outside Spokane, Boise, and Eugene, with orders to change positions once the word came down that Rotfungus had worked and the Zionists were blind in the sky. Indeed, there would be major troop relocations all across the fronts, to render the Americans' last snapshot of the Northwest military dispositions invalid. The SS divisions would act as floating reserves to be thrown in wherever there was a threat that the line units might give way, or more likely, wherever a weak point was detected where a breakthrough could be made. The overall strategy of Plan 17 was indeed similar to that of attacking wolves: vulnerable sections of the enemy would be cut from the herd, run down and bled to death, and when the whole beast was sufficiently weak, the SS would be sent in for the kill.

Just before the air raid sirens went off, Jason Stockdale was helping his wife Jenny load onto buses her personal contingent of over one hundred small children, ranging in age from five to eleven years, along with the support staff she would need to keep them safe.

Jenny's particular reserve formation was an adjunct of the Civil Guard called the Emergency Family Protective Service, comprised almost entirely of women, who had become known as Mama Bears. The EFPS was a formation created with this very day in mind. Before Bluelight, when it was feared that the Republic would have to stand the full might of the American bombers and missiles, it had been decided that the nation's greatest asset, its children, would not be sent down

into holes to huddle in fear in underground shelters while the bombs thundered overhead, risking burial alive by American bunker-busters or asphyxiation in a firestorm. There would be no Dresdens or Hamburgs in the Northwest. In addition, the fact was that almost all the fathers and many of the mothers of the Republic's infinite growing brood of kids would be needed at the front or on various military and war-related duties. The EFPS not only meant that the kids would be safer, but the men in uniform who were fighting off the invaders could be more confident that their kids were out of harm's way and being looked after, in many cases by their own mothers and relations, who had formed community and church groups through EFPS for the evacuation and relocation of untold multitudes of children.

The EFPS children would be dispersed in groups into the countryside, to special locations and facilities built in forested areas under as much cover as possible, and near small towns in more remote areas of the Northwest Republic. Each of these camps was equipped with cabins, kitchens and sanitary facilities, stockpiles of food and water, generators, medical supplies, a small infirmary, and so on. There school could continue, the children could play and be fed and cared for properly, and they would hopefully be traumatized as little as possible beyond the separation from their parents. There were special crèche refuges for infants and toddlers, but Jenny Stockdale's group consisted of older kids who were potty-trained and of sufficient maturity to obey adult instruction, insofar as kids that age ever did. Participation in the program was voluntary, but it was estimated that in time of war almost half the young children in the NAR would be thus protected from the near-certain American bombardment of the cities and larger towns. The British and Germans had done largely the same thing with their own young during World War Two.

Someone had once asked Jenny Stockdale if, after her experience as an NVA guerilla during the War of Independence, she didn't consider such babysitting duty in a time of national crisis to be degrading, or at least something of a comedown. Wouldn't she rather be doing something more exciting and swashbuckling like her exploits from the old days? She replied, "Not at all. The Fourteen Words say that we must secure the existence of our people, which is what I did during the revolt,

and also a future for White children, which is what I will be doing when the Americans come to try and take that future away."

Now Jenny got onto the first bus and placed her Kalashnikov in the rack by the driver's seat, then stood in the doorway and shouted, "All right, kids, let me have your attention! We've all practiced for this in our after-school drills and our weekend camp-outs, and now we have to do it for real. Sannie Van Reenen, when the grownups are talking, you are doing what?"

"Listening, Mrs. Stockdale," said the little girl.

"That's right, so listen and don't talk," Jenny told her. "Now we are going to get on the buses. Your counselors will assign you your seats, and you will not leave them unless you need to use the toilet in the back of the bus, in which case you will raise your hand and ask first. There will be no horsing around or general monkeyshines on the bus. Remember, the counselors are bringing guns to use against the Americans, but we also have a couple of paddles in our packs for any of you who can't behave yourselves. When we get to camp, you will collect your evacuation bags that your parents made up for you from the luggage compartment, and we will give you all your cabin and bunk assignments, and no switching or messing around. Kids, I mean it—it is very, very important that your counselor knows where you are at all times. I also want to remind you of the rule about no touching or messing with any of the counselors' guns or ammunition."

"I can shoot an AK!" called one boy. "My dad taught me!"

"I'm sure he did, David, but you won't need to shoot any of these. Now start boarding your assigned buses. Miss Winwood, please make sure Mister Christopher Benbow is seated where you can keep an eye on him and he can't pester any of the girls."

"Yeah, Christopher's gross!" yelled one of the girls.

"We'll see how you feel about that in about eight years, Nicole," said Jenny. "Alright, everybody on the buses, quietly and in single file!" They began boarding, herded by the counselors. The kids were not wearing their usual school uniforms, but comfortable outdoor clothing and strong shoes provided by their parents. Jenny got out of the doorway and stepped to Jason's side.

"Well, it could be worse," said Jason tightly. "They could have attacked in the middle of winter." All of a sudden the air raid sirens went off all across town, the low wailing up and down that had been the signature theme of so much of the past hundred years of glorious democracy. It was not a new sound to the children, since the sirens were tested every Saturday at noon and they were all used to it. Only a few of the older ones understood what the sound meant, and glanced apprehensively at the sky. "Christ! I never thought we'd have to hear that sound in this country!" hissed Jason. "Looks like the bastards are already on their way!"

"If so, then we need to be on our way too, Jace," said Jenny, her face grim.

"I know, honey," he said. "What's that?" He shielded his eyes, looking at the sky to the south. It was a sunny day, but for several minutes, there seemed to be some kind of eerie light show far southward like lightning flickering in the distance, with blue lines nipping into the sky and fireflies winking and blinking high in the stratosphere. The Mama Bears continued shepherding their young charges onto the bus, and in a matter of minutes, they were all seated.

"We better roll, Jace," his wife said. Then all of a sudden, the sirens stopped and there were three long honks, then three more, and then a final three. "What?" she exclaimed. "The all-clear already?"

Jason's phone bleeped and he opened it. He was hooked into the special high-echelon command tweet. "Well, I'll be hornswoggled!" he said with a grin of joy and relief. "Looks like that new anti-aircraft weapons system we've heard about works! Thirty-four planes and missiles headed for Missoula are now headed for the dirt! Looks like out of their whole first wave targeting this area, not a single *one* of the sons of bitches got through! *Hot damn!"*

"Oh, thank God!" said Jenny with a small sob. She looked up at Jason with tears in her eyes. "Jace . . ."

"We've been here before, Jen," he said softly, kissing her forehead.

"I know. And it was always hideous, back then too. Never knowing if this was the last time."

"We always met again, honey. We will this time, too," he assured her.

"Sure," she said with a wan smile. "But I thought the bad times were over there for a while. I really did. I convinced myself that they would leave us alone."

"They can't do that," said Jason. "Free white men are a flaw in the pattern they cannot abide. Our very existence is an affront to them. It drives them insane. We're living proof that their way is wrong, wrong, wrong, and every day that our society succeeds while theirs fails is another nail in history's coffin for them. They had to try this someday."

"I know," said his wife, her eyes hardening. "But I will never, ever forgive those Zionist scum for making us go through this again!"

* * *

About five miles away, a group of around eighty men and boys in uniform was assembling on the tarmac at the Missoula airport. Half of them were aging or downright elderly men wearing NDF camouflage and collar tabs bearing the letter B. The other half were kids and gangly teenaged youths wearing dark green fatigues and garrison caps with green and blue neckerchiefs. This group included several twelve and thirteen-year-olds. In front of them stood a chunky yet fit-looking man in his early sixties, with a shock of white hair. "All right, come on, form up there!" he snapped at them. The two groups got into ranks. *"Attention!"* Both groups snapped to a passable attention. "Stand at ease!" They did so. The man spoke to them.

"For those of you kids who don't know me, I am Sergeant First Class Eli Horakova, Northwest Defense Force Category B Reserves. That's us old farts. For you old farts who don't know these youngsters, this is C Troop of the Missoula Battalion of the Young Pioneers. Their troop leader is my son Thomas." He pointed to 17-year-old Tommy standing in front of his troop. "Tommy just graduated from Missoula High School a few weeks ago, and normally he would be headed for the Labor Service and then on to basic training, but given the present emergency he and the rest of his troop volunteered to become part of the NDF's Military Auxiliary Corps, otherwise known as the Cradle

and the Grave." There was laughter. "For the record, we are now Company A of the Third Battalion, Fourth Army MAC."

Eli went on, "My other son Ed is with his own army unit down along the Bitterroot someplace. My daughter, my daughter-in-law, and my grandchildren are being evacuated by the EFPS as we speak. Our family fled to this country after Longview with nothing but the clothing on our backs and with the Chicago cops hot on our trail over a small matter of a dead nigger. We're not going to run away again, and neither will any of you, or I'll shoot you myself.

"I know we're not full-blown soldiers, although some of us have been in the past, including some of our B-Specials who fought with the NDF during the Consolidation, and more of us who were with the American imperial forces in the Middle East. I myself did two tours in Iraq back in the day, and some of these older guys have campaign ribbons from there and Afghanistan and Iran and Gaza. You young men from the Pioneers, remember that. Some of us old guys got that way because we made it through a couple of wars. Listen to us, because we know what the hell we're doing. You B-Specials, don't be afraid to make use of the Pioneers' youth and strength. We may not be over the hill, but we're on the downward slope, and we need to face that fact. Don't any of you give yourselves a hernia or a heart attack lifting something that's too heavy for you or doing something you're no longer up to physically, because you want to play iron man in front of the youngsters. Like any military unit, we have to work as a team. Everything we have in the world depends on it. We will be assisting the NDF basically as gophers, doing all the little odd jobs that need doing, here, out in the field, wherever they send us. Everything from directing traffic, to KP and serving chow in the mess tent, to running messages, to counting buttons and acting as supply clerks, to driving ambulances or trucks, anything that will free up one more combat soldier for the actual fighting itself."

"Will we be issued weapons, Dad—I mean sergeant?" asked Tommy.

"Affirmative," said Horakova. "Not Excaliburs like the line units, but M-Sixteens from the older stock the NDF has kept stashed away. They have tens of thousands of them, and plenty of five point five-six

ammo. Just because we're supposed to be support personnel doesn't mean we may not have to fight. All of you who aren't Middle East vets from back in the bad old days have had at least some training, either through the B-Cat course or the Pioneers, and all of you should be familiar with the Sixteen. God knows, I remember it well. That's what we're going to do now, get issued with weapons, magazines, ammo, and cleaning kits. Then we spend the rest of today guarding the perimeter around the airport and digging foxholes for shelter during the bombing attacks that are on their way, although maybe not. I was just informed before I came out here that the first wave of enemy bombers and guided missiles that was launched at Missoula has been completely destroyed by some new kind of ray gun that our National Mad Scientist Doctor Joe Cord came up with." Cheers and rebel yells rang out along the tarmac

Eli went on: "When you're out along the perimeter here, you will notice two groups of vehicles, including some flatbeds with funny electronic gear on them, things that look like satellite dishes and big movie projectors. That's them. They have been assigned to protect the airport against aerial attack, although so far they haven't been needed because our guys further south and east of here have already stopped the enemy aircraft from reaching Missoula. Each of those units will have NDF regulars assigned to guard them. Do not approach these vehicles, engage in any conversation with their personnel, or ask any questions. These weapons are still top secret, and as far as you are concerned, they do not exist. They're just part of the scenery. Are we clear on that?" There were some nods and mumbles of agreement. "I can't hear you!"

"*Yes, sergeant*!" shouted the men and boys.

"Good. Now we march over to Hangar Twelve like as if we were proper soldiers, which we are, where we will be issued our own weapons. Company, *tenhut!* Left face! Forward, march!"

* * *

At six p.m. Eastern Daylight Time, President Hunter Wallace, attended by certain Cabinet and White House staff members, took his first official briefing from the Joint Chiefs in the White House Situation

Room. The mood was somewhat less than ebullient. Bluntly put, the first day of the invasion had been a disaster, and it wasn't over yet. "The first thing I want to know is what the fuck happened to our satellite communications?" snapped the president. "Why am I still turning on CNN and finding nothing but a picture of me with my mouth open, barking like a dog?"

"The enemy have uploaded some kind of computer virus onto the onboard hard drives and telemetry systems of every one of our birds, and they've not only knocked out our entire orbiting surveillance, they've wrecked almost the entire world satellite communications network," said Admiral Hector Brava. "Every American and European orbital communications and ground surveillance satellite is out of commission, and that barking dog shot of you is now the only thing on hundreds of millions of television and computer screens from here to London and Johannesburg. The only exception are the Russian satellites, whose orbitals appear to still be functional. In view of their cozy relationship with the Northmen, that comes as no surprise."

"Mr. President, could we please establish some conversational protocols for our meetings?" demanded an exasperated Janet Chalupiak, Secretary for Northwest Recovery. "The use of the term Northwest American Republic is bad enough, since it implies that we are dealing with some kind of actual country, but 'Northmen' is just as bad, because it gives the impression that these people are a real nation. They are not. They are a small group of racist, fascist and homophobic white male sociopaths who have been engaging in a criminal conspiracy against the lawful authority of the United States for the past seventeen years, and that's *all* they are. We must not allow them to control the narrative with this absurd notion that they are a legitimate nation."

"How about we just refer to them as those guys out there in the north woods who are kicking our ass?" suggested Vice President Hugh Jenner. He had just enough Oregon left in him to find Chalupiak's patronizing political correctness and insistence on controlling the narrative herself for them all to be irritating.

"With all due respect, Mr. Vice President, that's a damned lie!" said Marine Commandant Louis Battaglia. "United States Marines don't get their asses kicked, not by anyone."

"I think the late Delmar Partman would disagree, general," said Jenner acerbically. "Wake up and smell the coffee, ladies and gentlemen. In under ten hours we have lost almost four hundred American air crews and six hundred aircraft, if we include Cruise missiles. We have inflicted only minimal damage on the enemy. In fact, so far as we know, we have destroyed not a single designated target. I fail to see how that can be spin-cycled into victory. We're damned lucky most cable TV is out, otherwise the talking heads would be crucifying us!"

"Wait until our boys get their boots on the ground, Mr. Vice President, and then you'll see," said General Albert Scheisskopf.

"Speaking of which, do we have a single soldier inside the border of the racist entity yet?" demanded President Wallace.

"Not yet, sir," replied Admiral Brava. "Because of your—because of the advancement of the schedule, it's going to take a lot longer for the ground forces to get where they're going. More distance to cover on their Baghdad Boogie. Group South was already in its staging area around Billings when you moved the mission forward this morning, so they're set to roll, but Group Center is way out of position. They were supposed to start their push on Kalispell from the staging area on the Belknap Indian Reservation, but now the cat is out of the bag thanks to our lunatic CIA director, they have to begin their advance from Minot, North Dakota, which will put them almost three days behind. Group North will be even further behind, because they will be starting their northward flanking movement through Canada from Fargo instead of from Minot."

"But Group South is in position?" asked Wallace. "Great! At least one of the columns will be on schedule! Order them to begin their attack right away, Brava! We can spin that, can't we, Angela?" he said, looking at his press secretary.

"Sure," said Angela Herrin confidently. "Fog of war and all that. The other two columns are a little behind schedule, but no biggie. We just tell them to step on it. I mean, they're going to be rolling down paved highways, not route-marching over mountains."

Brava and Scheisskopf looked at one another, appalled. Scheisskopf spoke first. "Mr. President, we're talking about armies numbering hundreds of thousands of men and countless thousands of vehicles,

not a vacation excursion in the family RV! Troop movements on that scale are complex maneuvers that have to be planned and organized like clockwork. But more than that, the whole crux of the plan as far as the ground invasion goes is that all four columns, our three and the Aztlan Mexicans, *must* strike together! We are going up against at least several million men on the western and northern fronts, and we have to advance on them simultaneously so that they can't concentrate their forces on each column one by one. Otherwise, without our air power, we risk defeat in detail!"

"Did you say 'defeat,' general?" snapped Wallace. "Now *that* is a word that I will *not* hear in any conference or report again. Is that clear?"

"Speaking of the fourth column, how are our Mexican friends doing?" asked Jenner hastily. "Have they crossed the border from California yet?"

"Not yet," said General Scheisskopf. "They were caught even more off guard by the abrupt move forward of D-Day than we were and they're, uh, a bit more slow off the mark than we are. I think most of their troops are still down around Redding."

Brava was staring at his laptop computer. "Not good," he said. "I've just gotten an e-mail from our military liaison in Aztlan, Brigadier General Batista. He confirms that as of twenty minutes ago, V-3 Flying Bombs began falling on Sacramento and San Francisco. Some of them were high explosive warheads and have left impressive craters in the downtown areas of both cities, but others appear to be chemical and biological weapons. There are already reports of civilian casualties from what appears to be poison gas."

"Where the hell are our Patriot missile batteries?" shouted Marlon Bagwell, the Secretary of Defense. "We gave them to the Aztecs to reassure them that wouldn't happen!"

"The Patriots are firing and they have taken out a number of incoming V-3s without difficulty," said Brava, "But apparently, the North—excuse me, the racist entity had a lot more of them than we gave them credit for. Bad intel again. Batista says there are hundreds of the damned things coming at them. Not too surprising since we figure a V-3 costs roughly half a million dollars to manufacture, whereas one

Patriot now runs about fifty million, what with the damned inflation driving up costs by the month. The Patriots were designed to intercept and destroy intercontinental ballistic missiles carrying nuclear warheads coming out of the stratosphere at supersonic speeds, not repel what amount to spitball attacks by low-flying junkheaps coming at them almost at ground level in mass waves like a cattle stampede, and they simply can't stop all the damned things. It takes time to reload each Patriot missile into the launcher, and they're simply overwhelmed."

"A harbinger of things to come," said General Bellows of the U.S. Air Force. "We're going to have hundreds of those nasty little Nazi torpedo boats coming at Task Force Soaring Eagle as well, thousands of those propeller planes and attack copters coming at our ground troops, and hundreds of battalion-sized units attacking our advancing troops."

"That wasn't supposed to happen!" cried White House Chief of Staff Ronald Schiff in alarm. "The bombing and Cruise missile strikes were supposed to take out all their rocket launching platforms and their airfields and naval facilities with the first few hours! What if they decide to attack Vancouver, Canada? There are over a hundred thousand Jews living there, many of them Second Holocaust survivors from Israel who are already terribly traumatized by the idea of rockets falling on them!"

"Do we have any idea how the hell they managed to get to our planes and missiles?" demanded Wallace.

"Apparently, some kind of laser or plasma ray weapon," said Brava. "Not many of our pilots came back from the first wave, but those who did saw something that looked like beams of blue light coming up from the ground. Probably why the enemy call it Bluelight."

"Maybe Kanesha was right about the space aliens being on the Nazis' side," muttered Schiff. "Maybe she's not so crazy after all."

"I rather doubt it, Ron," said Wallace acidly. "What about the second wave?" he asked Brava.

"We didn't send in the second wave, of course," said Brava. "I've also put the seaborne assault from the carriers in Task Force Soaring Eagle on hold as well, since we have no idea what we're dealing with, and . . ."

"Son of a bitch!" shouted the President of the United States. "You mean we haven't actually *lost* control of the air war, we're just *conceding* it because we took a few losses?"

"Eighty percent casualties and over six hundred aircraft and missiles shot down is not a *few* losses, sir!" said Bellows sharply.

Wallace glared at him. "I'm no military man, but I know this country's military history. Even I can see that we're sending the cream of the United States Army and Marine Corps into combat against an enemy that outnumbers them by possibly as much as ten to one, and if we do *not* establish complete control of the air and start inflicting serious damage on the enemy's strength and capability this could turn into a nightmare! What about the parachute drops? Did you abort them as well, Admiral Brava?"

"Sir, these things can take down B-52s, F-15s and F-22s five and a half miles up, not to mention Cruise missiles, and some of those aircraft were traveling at supersonic speeds!" protested Brava. "What the hell could they do to lumbering C-130s and other transport planes and copters flying slow enough and low enough to drop paratroopers? They'd be massacred!"

"So you're sending three army groups in on the ground, blind in the sky and with no way to even tell where the enemy are, to be massacred instead?" demanded Wallace. "No, gentlemen, we have to turn their own trick on them. We have to overwhelm these ray gun things with sheer force and numbers! We have to get those bombs falling on their targets and get those paratrooper boots on the ground seizing their objectives and holding them in the Nazis' rear! We especially have to start hitting their major industrial and population centers, even if only as retaliation for their goddamned Flying Bombs on Frisco and Sacramento! And above all, we have to get those satellites back on line, so we can see what the hell we're doing and what they're doing, and get that goddamned picture of me barking like a crazy mutt off people's TV screens! What the hell do you think that does to our national morale, never mind mine? Admiral Brava, you will now do three things. First, you will immediately send orders for the second wave of bombing and missile missions to take off and hit their objectives like they should have done hours ago. Secondly, you will immediately order the planes from

the navy carriers to take off and begin their attacks on the urban areas and enemy infrastructure along the old I-Five corridor, as *they* should have done hours ago. Finally, you will order the airborne assault planes to take off and drop those paratroopers. We will get this show on the road, dammit!"

"Sir, it's the middle of June, the longest days of the year," said Brava desperately. "The sun doesn't set out there until almost ten o'clock, midnight our time, and that means the 101st Airborne, the 82nd Airborne and the 75th Rangers will be dropping in daylight onto targets surrounded by large concentrations of enemy troops who have not been softened up by so much as a single bomb, ready and waiting for them on the ground! The Northmen, or whatever the hell Janet wants to call them, will be able to see them all floating down, with the western sun at their backs and mostly in the eyes of our own men. It will be a slaughterhouse!"

"Then get the second wave of bombers and Cruises in the air and *soften* them up!" shouted Wallace. "Jesus Christ, man, I know I'm commander-in-chief, but does that mean I have to micro-manage everything and tell you your job?"

"Night jump, Hector," suggested Scheisskopf quietly. "Sir, with your permission, we'll hold off on the jumps until after dark, to give the second air attack wave time to do whatever they can in the face of these ray gun weapons or whatever they are. The darkness will shield our men from ground observation to a large degree, and at least let most of them hit the dirt alive without their chutes getting shredded in the air by small-arms fire."

"Night drops are always hard, especially if the drop zone is blacked out, and there's always disorientation and more difficulty in re-assembling on the ground," pointed out General Battaglia.

"I know, Lou," said Scheisskopf. "But better that than our boys drop right into a hornet's nest in full light."

"Fine, send them in at night, then," said Wallace. "In the meantime, we need to bend every effort and put every technical geek we have working for the U.S. government to work on finding some way to kill that damned virus and get our satellites back up and running. It's not just the military aspects we need. These racist motherfuckers have

screwed up civilian and commercial communications throughout the entire industrialized world, except of course for the Russians. The economic damage will be incalculable." He looked over at Secretary of State Modlin. "Dave, could you track down Ambassador Nichevsky, apologize for the lateness of the hour and the suddenness of this request, but ask him to come and see me at nine o'clock tonight?"

"Will do, sir," said Modlin with a nod

"I'll at least begin the process of bringing pressure on Big Bear to let us have access to their own military surveillance satellites, which despite their denials are mostly turned on us, I'm sure. Well, us and the Chinese border, but I'm sure they have enough capacity to make up for our lost eyes in the sky, if we can persuade them it's in their interest to do so. No doubt they've cut some kind of deal with the Northwest—sorry, Janet, the racist entity. We're probably going to have to make them a better offer and buy their help, the damned vodka-sodden pigs." Wallace looked at his watch. "Well, gentlemen, I have some things I need to take care of. We will reconvene here at ten o'clock tomorrow morning, and by then I expect to hear much better news about our progress." Wallace got up, the rest of the people around the table rose as well out of courtesy. Angela Herrin, Janet Chalupiak, and Ronald Schiff followed the president out the door.

"What the hell does he have to take care of that's more important than a war we're ten hours into and already losing?" wondered Brava aloud.

"Missed his seventh inning stretch," said Secretary of Defense.

"The hell you say!" snapped Scheisskopf. "The situation on Operation Strikeout is already critical, we've lost our satellite intel and a lot of our communications as well, the Jerries have some kind of fucking Star Wars light saber that's sweeping our planes from the sky like a broom, he just tossed off a couple of casual orders that will result in the death of thousands of American pilots and soldiers when they hurtle headlong into an enemy of unknown numbers, location, or capability, and he's taking a slut break?"

"You obviously haven't met the fetching Ms. Halberstam," said Modlin with a dirty leer.

Hunter Wallace was in bad mood, and so his session with Georgia in the executive lounge off the Oval Office was more than usually kinetic. The president had just stepped out of the shower with a towel wrapped around his waist when his personal phone beeped. He picked it up and glanced at it to see who was calling, then opened it. "Yes, Dave?" He listened for a bit. "On his way? Good. I'll see him in the Oval Office in ten minutes, then. Is the Rooski bastard sober, could you tell?" He listened again. "Okay, well, maybe it's better if he isn't. Tell housekeeping to send up a bottle of our best vodka and put it on the sideboard." He closed the phone. "Hey, babe, I've got an ambassador I need to see in there and get liquored up before I start twisting his arm. Would you mind going on up to the residence and using the shower up there?" One of Wallace's little oddities was that outside of their multifarious deviant sexual acts, he was unfailingly courteous and considerate to Georgia.

"Okay, sure," said Georgia, easing herself painfully up off the sofa and picking up her clothes. "Duty calls and all that."

Wallace's phone rang again, and he answered it. "Yes, Admiral? Good. How soon will the paratroops follow the second wave? Yes, I understand, they have to drop in after dark. All right, that's good. I'm seeing Nichevsky now and I'll check in with you for a progress report in a couple of hours."

When Georgia got up to the presidential bedroom and out of range of the in-house spy cameras, she whipped out her phone and brought up Birdie's latest home-made program, one she had been given that morning in the Zombie Master's office. She quickly texted, *Second bombing wave on the way. Paratroop drop to follow after sunset Homeland time, don't know where. HW meeting with Russian ambassador now.* She punched in a code number and a color photo of a white iron garden table surrounded by greenery appeared. There were plates of food and a large glass of iced tea on the table. The photo blinked and flickered as her text was coded and inserted between the individual pixels of the image. Then she texted again. *Hi, Talia. Got to eat supper in the Rose Garden tonight. Fajitas from the WH mess, yum yum! I stay with this gig too long I'm going to get faaaat!*

Georgia hit send, and then went into the bathroom to clean up and shower. The image went to Talia Halberstam, and was copied to Robert Campbell's phone. Campbell was at Birdie's place in Arlington, where he loaded the image onto a laptop and used a second program to decode the hidden message. He read it, swore out loud, coded the information into another program, encrypted it and sent it off to WPB headquarters in Olympia via a special uplink to a Lazarus Bird, one of the American spy satellites that the Republic's Technical Warfare Division had hijacked and turned on its makers, and which was still operational. Within minutes, the news was headed for the Northwest Defense Force General Staff, and thence to the NDF military commanders in the field. Many of them knew that the airborne troops were on their way before the officers of the 101st and 82nd themselves received their orders from the Pentagon CENTCOM.

Another order to the NDF went along with the intelligence of the impending airborne assault: "No prisoners."

* * *

The sky over Wolf Creek, Montana was deep blue and melding into purple as the sun finally set after the long June day; a few stars were now visible. HH Battery of the Technical Warfare Department's new Special Antiaircraft Weapons regiment was set up on a hilltop overlooking the old Interstate 15, now known as Border Highway. There were three short flatbed, half-tracked Mercedes trucks, bearing blue, white and green roundels on their doors. Each truck carried a Bluelight projector and the radar tracking and targeting system. Beside each flatbed was a smaller truck carrying the alcohol-fueled generator that powered each unit. Behind them were several more trucks used to transport the crews and miscellaneous gear and spare parts. Deployed in the brush all around the Bluelight weapons and crew was a full company of NDF riflemen and a battery of 75-millimeter fieldpieces to guard the Bluelights and their crews and prevent their capture; the Bluelight trucks themselves were equipped with explosive charges to destroy the machines rather than let them fall into enemy hands.

"Bogies coming in at twenty-two thousand feet from the northeast, sir," called out the primary radar operator, Sergeant Marla Thompson. "Thirty miles out and closing."

"Firing positions!" called the battery commander, Captain Billy Ray Downing. His crews jumped off the ground and out of their vehicles and clambered up onto the flatbeds. Downing was a lean and weather-beaten Texan from Amarillo who had done five years of a ten-year jolt in Huntsville for using a forbidden racial word in public during a fender-bender traffic accident, before he escaped and headed Northwest. "How many and how fast, sarge?"

"Ten of them in a cluster at mach two, sir. From the speed and individual mass looks like Cruise missiles," she called out. "Judging from their course I'd say they're headed for Missoula."

"Charges?" called out Downing.

"Full bars here!" called out each of the three gunners behind their SAW projectors.

"Lock on targets!" ordered Downing. "Take 'em out in incoming sequence, closest ones first."

"They're splitting up and taking what looks like evasive action, sir," called Sergeant Thompson.

"Probably detected our radar," said Downing. "Distance?"

"Twenty miles and closing, sir."

"Okay, boys and girls, wait for it. Give me a shout when they're about six miles out, sarge." Downing lit a cigar and puffed on it for a while.

"Six miles, sir!" called out Thompson after a minute.

"Start zapping 'em," ordered Downing. Blue needles of light cut through the sky. The plasma beams crackled again and again. Blossoms of flame appeared high in the air to the northeast, and the rumble of explosions rolled down like far-off thunder. "How are we doing, Marla?"

"Seven down!" called out Thompson. "Eight down! Nine!"

"Number one gun's dry, sir," called out one of the soldiers.

"Three's dead as well, Captain!" called out another.

"One bogey still in the air, sir!" reported Thompson. "Almost overhead."

"Lieutenant Farina? How's your charge?" asked Downing, walking over to one of the flatbeds.

"Two bars, sir," said Farina raising his muzzle almost perpendicular to the ground. "One more shot."

"Make it count, son," Downing told him. "That bogey might be the one loaded with anthrax." The projector crackled, the blue thread hissed upward, and a bright light like a flashbulb exploded overhead. Cheers and rebel yells arose from the troops all around. "Good shooting, Lieutenant!" Downing picked up his radio. "Elvis, this is Hound Dog One," he said. "Got your ears on?"

"I'm right here, Captain," called out the infantry company's CO, trudging out of the bush in full field gear. "Congratulations to you and your crews on an outstanding performance."

"Duly noted and appreciated, Captain Banks," said Downing. "Those bad birds may have been carrying bio-weapons or degraded uranium warheads, and some of the crap may be coming down with them, so you'll need to get your boys to do some sweeps with their detectors. Most of any fallout will come down over the road on their side, but the wind might blow it over into the Republic."

"I'll get my men on it," said Banks. "You got our next bug-out?"

"A deserted ranch a couple of miles south of here," said Downing. As a precaution, the Bluelight batteries always changed positions after every firing sequence. "CMI says their satellites are still down, but those bogeys may have been tracked or alerted their bases to our position when they detected our radar."

"I'll start getting my guys packed up and ready to move," said Banks.

"Any sign of movement over the road?" asked Downing, jerking his head to the east.

"I sent a couple of patrols over, and all they saw was a few jack rabbits. Other than that, not a soul stirring. We were at least expecting some Ranger Recons to leg it over, but apparently that hasn't happened yet."

"The more fools they, then. We need to un-ass this area and get set up in the new location ASAP, so we can get charged up," said Downing.

"Let's hope the Americans haven't figured out yet that it takes almost an hour to fully recharge a Bluelight projector."

* * *

By dawn, the news began to trickle into the Pentagon War Room, and it was unbelievably bad. The second wave of bombers and missiles had been decimated, this time losing almost three hundred aircraft and as many Tomahawks and Predator drones. The third wave from the aircraft carriers off the Pacific coast was hit even worse; the *Hornet* and the *Hillary Rodham Clinton* had not one single plane return to the ship. A few of the Stealth bombers had gotten through and hit their targets, but even without further losses, American air strength was now crippled for the rest of the war. Not only that, but large numbers of people were now known to be keeling over and dying from phosgene gas poisoning in the streets of Sacramento and San Francisco.

Details were sketchy, but the majority of the airborne assault troops sent to secure rear positions behind the NAR lines and draw troops away from the main invading columns died in the flaming C-130s that now littered the prairies, the forests, and the mountainsides of the inland Northwest. The transports had tried to evade the Bluelight projectors by coming in low, almost at treetop level, and by zigzagging and other evasive maneuvers. But that had caused its own problems: at least some of the Hercules transports had crashed into the ground due to pilot error in the dark. Others had fallen to extensive ground fire from artillery, shoulder-fired missiles, and small arms, and the closer they got to their designated targets, the more likely they were to run into a Bluelight battery concealed in a gully or behind a rise in the terrain.

Some of the paratroopers had indeed reached their drop zones, or somewhere near their drop zones. The evasive maneuvers had confused navigation, and in many cases, whole sticks of paratroops jumped and ended up falling into the Douglas firs of the Northwest forests, or simply miles away from whatever road or rail junction or small town they were supposed to occupy and hold. The scattered NDF battalions all over the countryside homed in on the invaders wherever they hit dirt, surrounded them, and killed them all. Sometimes companies or

larger units of Americans were able to seize a hill or small crossroads town and dig in a bit, but the dawn brought NDF troops and tanks and the deadly 75-millimeter and self-propelled 88-millimeter guns to blast apart whatever defenses they were able to erect. By noon on June 20, every single unit of the 101st Airborne, the 82nd Airborne, and the 75th Ranger Regiment were out of contact, and without satellite surveillance the Pentagon had no idea where they were or what was happening. The Northwest had swallowed them up.

"Jesus wept!" moaned Vice President Jenner. "Tens of thousands of casualties on our side, and we haven't even laid a glove on these racist motherfuckers yet!"

A rumor went around that the distracted General Albert Scheisskopf was wandering the corridors of the Pentagon, ranting and raving to himself, shouting out, "*Hunter Wallace, give me back my divisions!*"

* * *

D-Day, 0800 hours June 19th-0800 hours June 20th

NDF military casualties—32 dead, 84 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—27 dead, 112 wounded
United States military casualties—4,677 dead. 2,940 wounded
United States civilian casualties—212 dead, 811 wounded
Aztlan military casualties—890 dead, 1,366 wounded
Aztlan civilian casualties—7,598 dead, 13,000 wounded or gassed

XV

The Second Day
(D-Day plus one)

Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
—Tennyson

"Have they crossed any of our borders yet?" asked President Red Morehouse. It was late in the afternoon of June 20. Morehouse and his staff were sitting in an air-conditioned mobile command vehicle pulled into a camouflaged position just outside of North Bend, Washington, a converted 18-wheeler escorted by a small convoy of heavily armed SS vehicles from the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler's Presidential Unit, including a full Bluelight battery to intercept any American Predator drone or other aerial assassination attempts.

The president was maintaining communication with his military commanders and the rest of the nation through encrypted radio and cyber-communications, using a number of concealed underground fiber-optic lines that had been laid over previous years, with terminals spaced all around the Republic in anticipation of the present crisis. Morehouse was also keeping an eye on the enemy through the Lazarus Birds, the dozen or so satellites that the NDF's Technical Warfare Division had skyjacked and converted to the Republic's own use prior to Operation Strikeout and Rotfungus. The whole mobile command post concept was a throwback to the War of Independence when the NVA Army Council had moved in separate and nomadic cells around

the Northwest, directing operations and generating propaganda, etc. Morehouse himself was a former guerrilla leader, and he always opted for mobility over sheer numbers and firepower. "I mean have any of the ground troops crossed our borders, other than the paratroop drops?" he added.

"No, sir," said Defense Minister Carter Wingfield, sitting across from the president at a narrow table.

"How are we coming on those?"

"The last of them should be mopped up before dark, Mr. President," Wingfield told him. "They tried to dig in at a couple of places, but our field artillery was able to blast them out before they had time to get too entrenched. It was a damned good idea assigning every battalion its own cannons, and it's paying off. The paratroopers haven't been able to hold on anywhere, and it looks like what's left of them are breaking up now into platoon-sized groups and trying to E & E. Most of them seem to be heading for the border, possibly looking to hook up with their own columns, but I doubt many of them will make it. There's just too many battalions of NDF scouring the countryside for them. The Americans not only have our own troops all around them, but the local people are all over them as well. Civilians are calling in enemy sightings to the NDF, and in a lot of cases picking up their own weapons and firing on them. Those poor bastards dropped into in a hornet's nest. They must feel naked without their air cover."

Annette Sellars was in uniform now, of semi-dress dark gray, wearing on her shoulders and garrison cap the oak leaves of her reserve rank of major in the NDF, as well as her own tricolored War of Independence ribbon. She looked up from her computer screen. "Sir, Admiral Leach reports that Operation Sea Lion is ready to roll. Weather reports indicate it will be cloudy in the north Pacific tonight, no moonlight, and so he recommends launching the attack fleet at sunset."

"He doesn't want to give his vessels at least a few hours of daylight to get into the combat zone?" asked Morehouse. "Some of those boats will be having to get up there from as far south as Coos Bay and as far north as Whidbey."

"No, sir, he wants to avoid possible spotting aircraft launched from the enemy aircraft carriers. He's staggering the departure times of each

flotilla so they can all rendezvous at around oh-two-hundred hours and attack in the dark."

"All right, if Leach is good with it, tell him it's a go," said Morehouse with a nod. "Carter, how's the southern front looking?"

"Our Lazarus Birds are on the Mexicans like ugly on an ape. They're pouring up the old Interstate Five like ants, more a disorganized mob than an army, with a smaller force heading up through Nevada on old Eighty, from which they will presumably get onto old U.S. Ninety-Five, and try to enter eastern Oregon that way. Air Marshal Basquine figures the best place to hit them is the mountainous stretch between Yreka and Hornbrook, at dawn tomorrow, right before they enter the Republic. The way they're going, they'll be all bunched and tangled up along that twisty-turny road, in some places with nothing but sheer cliff on one side and sheer drop on the other. The Songbirds and Starfighters should be able to rip 'em up pretty good. Not much cover or room for evasion on those mountainsides along that stretch. The pilots have all been trained running simulation flights in similar stretches of the highway on our side, for years now."

"You forget all those goddamned Chinese copters and pilots," said Morehouse. "The Aztecs may be thick, but the Chinese aren't, and they knew any invasion force moving into the Northwest Republic up I-5 through the mountains would be vulnerable as hell from the air. That's why they brought in all those gunships, to help out their beaner buddies and cover the main ground force from the south. It's going to be a bloody mess."

"The Starfighter pilots have all been given crash training courses in copter-fighting ever since we spotted those things coming in down at San Diego, Mr. President," said Wingfield. "We'll have to hope it turns out to be some use. The Nevada-Oregon column from Aztlan will be harder to impede. There's a lot of flat or rolling countryside out there, and the Mex will be able to spread their vehicles out overland and make it harder for the Songbirds to hit them on the move. On the upside, it's damned near uninhabited down there, so there are fewer civilians to get in the way and less collateral damage to worry about. We've got forward airfields in the Crooked Creek Range and the Catlow Rim,

but only about a hundred aircraft, all told. We're spread too thin to allocate more."

Morehouse sighed. "I know. We're light on ground troops in that sector as well, but looks like Bobby Bells and his Sixth Army are going to have to close with them and fight a long running battle. Most of that column of beaners will probably get through into the Republic, but as you said, that's mostly a lot of empty space and we can afford a certain degree of strategic retreat there. It's our weakest area, and I'm surprised the Chinks didn't spot it. The Aztecs *must* be stopped from linking up with the Americans coming from the east and north."

"DiBella will shred those greaseballs up into taco meat, sir!" growled Annette Sellars fiercely.

"I have every confidence he will, Major," replied the president with a smile. "Carter, make sure Bells and all our field commanders understand that we just want to take out their vehicles during first contact. That's the main thing. Same as with the Americans. We want all of these bastards *walking* through our country on long, hot summer days carrying nice heavy packs and gear. Now, the Americans?"

"U.S. Combined Group North's ETA on the border of the Republic at Sweet Grass is in thirty-six hours, but we anticipate they won't attempt to cross over until they hit Idaho, so they can drive for Coeur d'Alene," Wingfield reported. "Billy Jackson is keeping his Third Army pulled back and in an extended line for miles all along the Border. No concentrations. If and when the enemy cross over, the NDF will engage in single and brigaded battalions, slow them down until we can figure out whether it's a feint or the real thing. If it looks like they're going to punch through to Coeur d'Alene or Spokane, we order a general engagement and we throw in the Florian Geyers right at their headquarters element."

"Especially Coeur d'Alene," said Morehouse. "Our nation was born there during the Sixteen Days. We don't surrender our birthplace."

"Of course not, Mr. President," agreed Wingfield. "Otherwise, Jackson will try for the old Cannae trick: fall back in the center and let both wings envelop the enemy. That's the same goal Hatfield and Drones will be trying for, although we hope we can really hammer their Group South out of action with Baumgarten's northward attack

from out of Wyoming on the enemy's flank and rear. Then once the southernmost American column is done for, the Seventh and Fourth Armies link up with Zack Hatfield's Second Army and turn the same trick on Group Center, and take them out of action. Then they join up with Billy Jackson and everybody lunges for Group North's throat. That's the theory, anyway."

"Let's see how the practice works out," said Morehouse grimly. "Now the bad news. Eric, what's our air raid damage?"

Colonel Eric Sellars brought up a screen on his computer and looked it over. "Frankly, sir, our biggest problem seems to be damage and casualties from falling debris off demolished enemy aircraft, hitting houses in the towns and cities and starting forest fires in the countryside. Eight Cruise missiles got through the Bluelight batteries along the coast, sir, with two hits on Fort Lewis, three on Seattle, and three on Portland. We lost a methane yard at Fort Lewis. There was a big-ass explosion and at least fifty casualties, but that was the worst of it. We also lost the base headquarters building and office complex, but that was so obvious a target that we evacuated it, and there were only a few wounded. One Cruise came into Seattle on fire. Apparently, a Bluelight hit it, but didn't bring it down. It went off course and crashed into the Queen Anne neighborhood with several dozen civilian casualties, and the foundation of the Space Needle may have been damaged and undermined. They may have been trying to wipe out a famous Seattle landmark. The other two Seattle hits left craters but no casualties. Three came into Portland in a group and about eight blocks of downtown was pretty much leveled, but again due to the general evacuation, casualties were low. There were also some bomb strikes from enemy aircraft, but none on any significant targets. It looks like the American pilots panicked and just dumped their payloads so they could turn tail and get the hell out of there, get away from the Bluelight. No more air attacks reported for the past eight hours. I guess they're either getting the message, or else running out of planes and missiles. Sir, you know how much terribly worse this could have been. Bluelight has worked! We've broken American air power!"

"Praise God!" whispered Morehouse. "Is Rotfungus holding?"

"Yes, sir," said Sellars. "TWD reports the Americans are frantically trying to re-establish communications with the satellites, trying to find some kind of back door around it, and they're throwing every anti-virus software they've got up into the sky, but Rotfungus has burned out all the comm circuits. The most skillful hacker can't wake the dead. Looks like their satellites are down for the duration."

"Is my opposite number in the White House still barking like a dog?" asked Morehouse with a chuckle.

"Affirmative, sir, and already a lot of American media are commenting on it," said Sellars with a grin. "Someone threw a package of dog biscuits over the White House fence this morning."

"They've lost their toys, their machines," said Wingfield grimly. "Now the world will see how tough they are as men. Or not."

* * *

At seven o'clock that night, the sun was still fairly high in the sky over Bannack, Montana. Bannack stood beside Grasshopper Creek, a tributary of the Beaverhead River. Founded in the year 1862 by miners working a silver strike that played out within a few years, Bannack had long been a ghost town under the United States. But the Northwest Republic took the view that towns were for people, not ghosts, so after Longview the new government had run in electric power, installed sewers and a water treatment plant, patched up the old homes and built new ones. Bannack was now home to around 2,000 townspeople, mostly German immigrants who had come seeking the Wild West. They had found it in Bannack. They wore their cowboy hats to evenings in the local beer garden, and they called their local riflery clubs *Schűtzbunde.*

Eli's son and Robert Campbell's brother-in-law Edward Horakova, now aged twenty-eight and the size and build of a short mountain, presently served as gunnery sergeant in command of one of the 75-millimeter fieldpieces in the battery attached to the Eighth Battalion of the 85th Infantry Regiment, Northwest Defense Force. Their regimental badge on their left shoulders was a patch bearing the numerals 8 and 5 on either side of a battle-axe. The first three battalions of the 85th were regular soldiers, although many of them were now seconded

and scattered throughout the remaining nine battalions of reservists as officers and NCOs. Most of the reservists came from the southern Montana area around Missoula, Anaconda, and the NAR sector of Butte. They had trained extensively all across this very terrain, the soil they knew they would be expected to defend when the invasion came.

Unlike the battalion's 88-millimeter guns, which were self-propelled and mounted on half-tracked vehicles called Ground Hogs, the 75-millimeter guns were drawn into action by powerful all-terrain four-by-fours called Heeps, since their designers claimed that they combined the best characteristics of both the Humvee and the Jeep, including an astounding 44 miles to the gallon across open country, running on fuel alcohol manufactured in the Republic. The 75s were modeled on the famous French model 1897 *soixante-quinze* of World War One, and were of a similar general configuration. They were, however, much lighter than their great-grandfathers from the Marne and Verdun, because their barrels were forged from much superior modern steel. They were mounted on carriages with light and supple pneumatic radial tires, and as many of the other parts as possible were made from aluminum, hardened Bakelite, or even wood.

The 75s also fired much more powerful and versatile rounds than the older version, starting with a high explosive shell using SuperSem, a hopped-up version of Semtex. There was a Thermite anti-tank round that could burn through the armor plating of any known American military vehicle. The third nasty tune in the 75's repertoire was an anti-personnel flechette round with a shell made of concentric layers of thin steel stripping that on impact would burst into thousands of tiny fragments of shrapnel the size of buckshot: it was like hitting the enemy with a giant shotgun blast. The 75's range was five miles, and a skilled gun crew could fire fifteen accurate and well-placed rounds per minute. The self-propelled 88s were even bigger and meaner, their crews trained to fight running duels with tanks. This was good country for it. Between the two of them, the Northwest artillery had blasted from a distance what few airborne invaders had reached the ground alive out of every position they had tried to hold. Absent their own artillery and above all their own tank-hunting helicopter gunships, the

American paratroopers had been blown to pieces and run down like rabbits.

The 85th was now rolling down a long road through a valley running by Grasshopper Creek, throwing up a cloud of dry summer dust. They were headed for the Border Highway, old Interstate 15, and it now looked like they would be the first NDF line unit to make contact with the actual ground invasion. "We're going to write a little history today, boys," their regimental commander Colonel Alfred Packer had told them over their individual headphones. "Let's make sure it reads real good to the millions of school kids in this Republic of ours over the next couple of hundred years. Remember, they're gonna be tested on it."

"Yes, *sir!*" shouted back almost the entire regiment of a little over six thousand men.

Now the officers and men of the 85th heard their CO again in their ears. "Choppers, this is Battleaxe. I've just been informed by the Fourth Army Command that the enemy have crossed the Border Highway and are now on the soil of our Homeland. This sector has been invaded by one division-sized mechanized force about thirty thousand strong, which appears to have divided into three columns, two of them turning north toward Dillon and one coming right for us down the Valley Road, or what the Americans probably still designate as Highway 278. So far as we know, the enemy is still blind in the sky, and so they may not know that we are here. We'll remedy that soon enough. Other NDF units will take care of the two enemy columns heading for Dillon, but the one heading for Bannack is ours. They're not going to get there. Our Luftwaffe spotters are keeping us advised of their position, and it looks like we'll beat them to Black Buffalo Bridge. That's as far as they get. It's show time, boys. Battalion COs meet me on Channel Two."

"Don't the Zoggies have any air support at all?" asked Corporal Gunther Eckhardt of Ed Horakova's crew as they rolled down the road, their gun bumping along behind them on its caisson. "You'd think we'd see a few copters by now."

"I heard they're actually bringing in their helicopters on the backs of big flatbed trucks," said Eddie. "Those new energy weapons have scared the shit out of them, and they're hoarding their gunships like

gold, scared to send them into the air, which kind of defeats the whole fucking purpose of having them." Eddie's speech was still the flat dialect of Chicago even after twelve years surrounded by cowboys and European expats in Montana.

Colonel Alfred Packer shared his command Heep not only with his driver, but with Technical Warfare Department Sergeant Joanna Sedley, who was sitting in the back with a large laptop computer linked to a Lazarus Bird. She also had a chat room opened with the Luftwaffe intelligence officer at a nearby forward airfield. "Our guys are just using microlights to scout the Zoggies, Colonel," she reported to Packer. "No combat aircraft yet. But Major Glimco says they have a whole squadron of twelve Songbirds revving up on the field, ready to go when you call them in."

"Outstanding!" said Packer. He hit the button on his commpack for Channel Two. "Hatchet Men, this is Battleaxe," he said to the majors commanding the battalions. "Our ETA at the bridge is four minutes for the forward units."

"Battleaxe, this is Hatchet Three," said Major Wilkie Collins. "Do we take the bridge, blow the bridge, or rig it to blow?"

"No, the local people will still need to use it when we're done here," Packer told him. "Let the Zionists try to force it. That's a good narrow kill zone, a bottleneck, and we'll stop it up by filling it with their dead. Okay, boys, here's how we roll. First, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Battalions will occupy the high ground on the west side of Black Buffalo Bridge, along with all, repeat, all of the regimental artillery. That's our center. Second, Fourth, Fifth, and Twelfth Batts will move south a distance of approximately two miles, where you will cross Grasshopper Creek and move eastward in battle order for another three miles, detaching companies at four-to-five-hundred yard intervals, where they will sit tight for a while, unless the enemy discovers them and attacks. Third, Ninth, Tenth, and Eleventh Batts will do the same, only they will cross the Grasshopper two miles to the north, then move three miles eastward, again detaching individual companies as they move. Since the enemy are blind in the sky and we're not, we should be able to pull this off while maintaining an element of surprise, at least until we all get across the creek.

"The enemy will almost certainly attempt to force the bridge and attack our center. They are to be met with the entire force of our artillery when they do. When they fail to break through in the valley and over the bridge, they will attempt to flank the center's position, and that's where the two wings come in. When the Americans try to get around us, they run into our right and left flanks on either side of them. We put them in a straitjacket, hold them down so they can't move, and then we beat them to a bloody pulp.

"The guns will set up covered firing positions along the ridgeline at approximately fifty-yard intervals or as close as you can get to it. We will hold them on the east side of the Grasshopper while they pile up on the other side of the bridge. If the enemy do not attempt an immediate flanking maneuver, then as soon as the sun sets, the detached companies on both the right and left flanks across the creek will move toward the enemy and engage them. Do not attempt to overrun them, and do not allow yourselves to be overrun, either. Do not cross Valley Road in either direction even if the opportunity offers. Night fighting is tricky, even with infrared vision gear, and we don't want our own guys running into each other and firing on one another in the dark. If it looks like you may be surrounded or if there are just too many of them, fall back, then circle back in and hit them again from another angle. We don't want any wild abandoned attacks against superior forces and firepower here. We're not going to wipe them out, not yet anyway. We're going to bleed them, pin them down, confuse and demoralize them, and above all, we are going to destroy as much of their motorized transport as we can. Concentrate on taking out their vehicles. Remember, Montana is a mighty big place. We want them walking across it."

Thirty minutes later, Brigadier General Herbert Smith of the United States Army approached the Black Buffalo Bridge from the east. He brought with him the nine thousand or so troops of the 4th Mechanized Infantry Brigade out of Fort Leonard Wood, which had been assigned to occupy the town of Bannack, establish a small military administration headed by one Captain Chaim Lipshitz of the Judge Advocate General Corps to run the town, backed by a company of military police, and then head north to re-unite with the two columns from the 36th Infantry Division and 10th Mountain Division that

composed their particular Combat Operations Group of the United States Combined Military Force South.

The Pentagon's war-gamers were wise to the wolf-and-caribou analogy. They had spotted the danger of keeping their three invasion forces together in one big huge mass and leaving the many smaller NDF units so much room to maneuver and attack from all sides. In a last-minute change of tactics, they had modified the grandiose "Baghdad Boogies" they had planned for all three of their armies, and the Americans were now moving their forces into the Republic from each army group using multiple detached units of anywhere from brigade to full division strength, small enough to maneuver and move quickly, but hopefully large enough to beat back attacks from the NDF. They were trying to duplicate the same Cannae-like strategy in offense that the Northwesters were attempting in defense, modeling their attack on Patton's hedgerow-hopping advance through Italy and France during the Second World War, a series of swift enveloping movements they hoped to emulate almost a century later.

Brigadier General Herb Smith was a short and lean man with the traditional buzz-cut that most West Pointers usually retained through their whole lives. His old-style Iraq desert fatigues always seemed to be starched and to hold razor-sharp creases, even in heat like this. Smith sat in his personal Humvee, pulled over to one side of the road, watching his long column of troops rumble by in their trucks, their Strykers, and their Bradley Fighting Vehicles. He held in his hand an ordinary field radio, in lieu of his usual encrypted personal helmet phone communication device, which was dependent on a satellite and which could now show him only a picture of his commander-in-chief with his mouth open, barking like a dog. The voice of Captain Jason Beard, U.S. Army Ranger Recon, crackled in his ear. "Foxtrot Five, this is Romeo Echo Charlie. Forward lurps are in. They report Nazis ahead, sir. Thousands of 'em."

"That's what we came here for, Captain," said Smith, nodding to his driver to move out. His Humvee sped along the side of the road past the slow vehicles filled with troops. Smith spoke into his radio. "Alpha Sierra Charlie, this is Foxtrot Five. Tell our birds it's time they quit hitchhiking on Daddy's shoulders and spread their wings. Get the gunships into the

air, get them four or five clicks ahead of us, and tell them to start blasting anything that moves wearing a goddamned Swastika. It's time we had some fucking air cover on this little excursion."

It took the Americans some minutes to get their six Apache gunships launched from the flatbed trucks that had been hauling them laboriously up hill and down since the brigade had left Billings, but once they were in the air the assault craft swooped toward the valley and the Black Buffalo Bridge across the highway. They were met by a hail of small arms fire from thousands of weapons and shoulder-fired missiles. Their own rockets and chain guns managed to inflict a few NDF casualties and knock out one 75-millimeter gun and one self-propelled 88, but in a matter of two minutes, three of the six choppers were down and lying in flaming heaps on the ground, and the others turned and ran. It wasn't only the Bluelight weapons that could bring copters down. Smith himself ordered the retreat. He had no intention of stripping himself completely of his aerial scouting capability.

Smith ordered his Ranger-filled Bradleys and his Strykers forward out of the cover of the wooded hills to secure the small, nondescript concrete bridge he now saw through his field glasses as he stood up in his Humvee. Many of his vehicles were tracked, and they could easily ford the minor obstacle of Grasshopper Creek on their own, and his engineers could throw temporary bridges across the small stream with no difficulty. Technically speaking it wasn't necessary to take Black Buffalo Bridge, but capturing a bridge with such a picturesque name had a definite cachet to it. It sounded good: future vets swilling beer in bars and saying, "I was with Herb Smith at Black Buffalo Bridge!" Besides, Smith's Rangers were armed with the new-fangled "corner guns" developed for use in the Middle East, weapons that were in essence small grenade launchers that fired a timed and calibrated charge slightly over the head or to one side or other of a concealed enemy, burst in the air, and took him out with concussion and shrapnel even as he remained behind his cover. They had been used in Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, and Gaza with some success, although they were by no means the mighty terrorist-slaying miracle weapon claimed for them. Even in modern combat, the man behind the weapon was more important than the weapon itself.

Finally, there was another sub rosa consideration: Smith had a schedule to keep. His boss, General Albert Scheisskopf, had been very specific about that: all American units had to keep to the schedule, lest it look bad to the president and the media. Like so many American military adventures over the past century, this wasn't just a war, it was a made-for-TV movie, and the U.S. military's masters wanted to keep to the script with no ad-libbing allowed. Never mind anything the enemy might have to say about it.

Four of the lead American Bradleys floored it on Smith's orders, and they headed for the bridge. They made it without drawing any hostile fire, rather to Smith's surprise. The Ranger platoon in the Bradleys leaped out of their armored vehicles, seized the bridge, quickly checked it for explosives and found nothing. They reported back to Smith that the bridge was clean. "Establish a perimeter and hold it until our forward units reach you, Captain," Smith told the Ranger officer. "We'll get you some help down there ASAP. Hey, maybe the Nazis are going to be gents about this and let us stroll on across."

Two Stryker assault vehicles crossed the bridge and assumed positions on either side of the Valley Road, their weapons pointing to the faintly seen enemy who seemed to be scuttling in and out among the scattered trees about five hundred yards up the slope and along the road. "We be sittin' ducks out here," muttered Sergeant Omar Little, one of the Stryker's .50-caliber machine gunners, to his comrade-in-arms, Specialist Leo "Hook" Chamblin, who sat behind the vehicle's 40-millimeter grenade launcher. Chamblin was a former pimp from New Orleans who had been offered the choice of three years in prison or three years RA. In real life, Hunter Wallace's much-vaunted new recruiting standards for the American military were sometimes not quite so vaunted as all that.

"I see sumpin' movin' ober dere in dem muthafukkin' trees," said Specialist Chamblin. He did indeed, and it was the last thing he ever saw. The entire First Battalion of the NDF's 85th Infantry Regiment opened fire on his black ass at a distance of from two hundred to three hundred yards, concealed as they were in quickly dug and camouflaged scrapes. A trained NDF company with all its men and weapons could dig into almost any terrain and present not a single visible target to a

frontal observer within three minutes; when the Americans on the bridge took up their position their eyes had been on the ridge line, and they had no idea that there were hundreds of Northmen almost within spitting distance of them. The bullets shredded Chamblin and Little into hamburger, while two Thermite shells from 75-millimeter cannon crashed into the Stryker and melted about half of the vehicle down into a puddle of steel, along with the driver inside it.

* * *

The main infantry weapon carried by millions of Northwest Defense Force, SS, and other NAR military during the Operation Strikeout campaign was the Excalibur Model Three assault rifle, otherwise known as the X-3. The Republic's endless legion of gun nuts had spent the past twelve years almost coming to blows over the design and specifications for the Northwest military's workhorse weapon, but finally they had produced the X-3.

In configuration, the weapon resembled the old Chinese SKS, but instead of the archaic stripper clips, it fed from detachable and interchangeable 20-round or sometimes 35-round curved magazines like an M-16 or AK-47. The SKS's attached bayonet had been dropped as a useless anachronism, over the screams of countless military traditionalists, and the muzzle of the weapon was fitted with a combined flash and sound suppressor. Like the SKS, the stock and grips were of wood, a plentiful commodity in the Northwest Republic. The rifle was chambered for standard NATO 7.62 X 51mm cartridges; it had an automatic fire selector switch and could be used as a squad-level full-auto weapon if necessary. The weapon was slightly lighter than the old SKS, weighing in at about seven pounds eight ounces. Its effective range in the hands of a skilled marksman was 900 yards, and in the Northwest Defense Force, every soldier was a skilled marksman. The time and effort that the United States Army expended on politically correct Mickey Mouse bullshit, the NDF spent on the rifle range and on squad and company-level fire-and-maneuver courses.

Each NDF rifle company also had at least three Widowmakers, otherwise known as the Squad Light Machine Gun or SLMG Model

5. This was a magazine-fed machine gun on a Russian RPD frame, but a lot lighter to carry. The bipod-mounted weapon was chambered for NATO 7.62 packed into 50-round curved magazines or 100-round plastic drums, and so the enemy's M-60 ammo fit it nicely. It had a cyclic rate of fire somewhat slower than its parent weapon, only 600 rounds per minute, which allowed for better control and greater accuracy, and it was considered effective up to 1200 yards. The best marksmen in each company got to pack one of the two Lockhart rifles, the 7.62-millimeter M-21 that the greatest sharpshooter from the War of Independence had actually carried himself, or else a lighter and more accurate version of the Barrett M82 .50-caliber weapon that many of the NVA snipers had used, known as the Big Bopper.

Add to this an assortment of rifle grenades, hand grenades, and other deadly impedimenta in the hands of the individual NDF soldiers, throw in shellfire from the sixty-odd fieldpieces attached to the 85th Infantry Regiment, and the Rangers on Black Buffalo Bridge never knew what hit them. Their corner guns did them no good. They were all dead and all of their vehicles were burning junk heaps before the rest of the American vehicles winding down the Valley Road were even halfway to the bridge. Then the shells started raining down on the rest of them.

* * *

As the shells and bullets began flying back and forth across Black Buffalo Bridge in Montana, hundreds of miles away, another battle was in preparation, all along the Pacific coast of the Northwest American Republic. Admiral David "Bloody Dave" Leach of the Kriegsmarine was getting ready to lead his motley fleet of coastal defense vessels out against a full-fledged U.S. Navy task force.

The Lazarus Birds had pinpointed the location of the American Task Force Soaring Eagle, almost ninety miles west of the Columbia River Bar. The American fleet's commander, Vice Admiral Hiram Warner, had positioned his fleet that far out so that his ships would receive plenty of warning of the approach of any hostile attacking craft from the shore by sea or by air. While it was true that Rotfungus still

held the U.S. satellite surveillance system in its grip, Task Force Soaring Eagle still had effective aerial surveillance in the form of over a dozen carrier and frigate-based helicopters that patrolled the seas as close to the Northwest coast as they dared to come, looking for the Kriegsmarine's ships.

Admiral Hiram Warner was not a happy camper. His naval task force had failed in its primary mission of reducing the western industrial and population heartland of the Northwest American Republic to rubble, and now almost all of the carriers' bomber and fighter-bomber aircraft were blasted shards of burned metal littered up and down old Interstate Five, scattered among the Seattle and Portland suburbs, and through the Olympic mountains. His vessels carried the usual complements of U.S. Marines, and he was now bombarding the Pentagon with requests to be allowed to send them and drafts of armed sailors ashore to seize the towns of Astoria and Seaside. If for no other reason, Warner wanted to do this out of revenge for the humiliating defeat that the Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization and the United States Coast Guard had suffered at the hands of the NVA at nearby Sunset Beach, Oregon almost exactly thirteen years before. [See *The Brigade*.]

There is little room at sea for tactical maneuver or for any element of surprise, since there is no cover to hide behind, and sonar and radar can always let a navy ship know who and what is coming for dinner. During most of World War Two and in the infrequent naval engagements since then, such as the Falklands War of 1982, naval warfare had consisted almost entirely of aircraft versus surface vessels, and very occasionally surface vessels against submarines or surface vessels against shore batteries of missiles. The trick to winning at sea consisted of locating one's opponent through radar or satellite surveillance, and then slipping or blasting past his anti-aircraft defenses with a missile such as an Exocet. Ships fighting other ships on the open sea had been virtually unknown since the battle of Jutland in 1916; even the mighty *Bismarck* had been sunk by torpedo bombers. Naval strategists and tacticians simply didn't think in those archaic terms anymore. Yet this was Leach's plan.

He really had little choice, because he had little to attack with. A blue water navy was always one of the most expensive toys that any nation could indulge in, and the Northwest American Republic could

never afford the luxury. Instead, the General Staff of the NDF had concentrated on quantity, combined with as much quality as could be packed into small packages. They had produced a fleet of small, light coastal defense vessels, including submarines, in order to prevent coastal infiltration by small commando groups of hostiles from the Office of Northwest Recovery or anywhere else, and especially to hamper and interdict any attempt at a seaborne invasion. This wasn't such an actual invasion, since the Americans simply didn't have enough combat troops to add a fourth prong, but a large U.S. Navy task force could not and would not be allowed to sit off the Republic's coast and threaten white life and limb, even if it was true that almost all of their aircraft carriers' planes had been blown out of the sky like mosquitoes flying into a bug-zapper.

The mainstay of the Kriegsmarine's coastal defenses was the Torpedo Assault Craft or TAC boat, a forty-two-foot vessel armed with three rocket-propelled torpedoes packing PBX warheads and a magnesium core that could burn through a carrier's outer bulkhead in less than a second. There was also a 20-millimeter cannon and twin. 50-caliber belt-fed Browning machine guns on the deck. The TAC boat rode low in the water and was hard to spot in the darkness or in choppy seas. It was powered by a methane turbine engine, and it had retractable hydrofoils that allowed it to make a torpedo run at speeds of up to 55 knots. Its range was short; less than 400 miles round trip, and its armor was non-existent. The TAC boat was all speed and punch, all engine and weaponry. It didn't even have any bunks for the four-man crew, just a couple of hooks to stretch out a hammock between them when one man out of the four wanted to catch 40 winks. No one would be sailing across the Pacific in one.

Then there were the MAC boats, Missile Assault Craft or "punchies." These were even smaller, lighter, and faster vessels of fiberglass that packed only one Nova missile and a single .30-caliber Browning machine gun, which was mainly there for morale purposes, to make the sailors feel a little less helpless once the missile was gone. Their range was even shorter than that of the TACs, and reaching the American task force would take them pretty much to their limit, but all they were expected to do was to make one fanatical charge at an American vessel,

cut loose with the Nova and its polymerized magnesium warhead, and then break off and head back to port. That is if they weren't ripped to pieces and sunk by the computer-controlled enemy chain guns, High Energy Laser (HEL) weapons, and repeating cannon.

The sun was setting over the long rows of docks at the Hammond Naval Station just south of Astoria, Oregon, as Admiral David Leach stepped on board TAC-157, which had been specially fitted with communication and electronic gear in the pilothouse to enable him to get an overview of the entire fleet action and speak with his vessels' captains. Leach wasn't wearing his navy blue sea fatigues; he had decided to affect his full dress uniform including his ceremonial sword for this trip. His Fleet Operations Officer stood beside him on the dock. "Sir, I have to ask again, does the State President know that you intend accompanying the fleet into action personally?" asked Commander Alexander Krycek in a concerned voice. "You're the head of our whole navy!"

"I didn't actually mention the matter, no, but Red knows me well enough to understand that I will never send my men into a situation like this where I won't go myself," replied Leach. "As to me being head of the navy, you might better put it that I'm taking almost the whole damned navy with me on this lunatic expedition. If I don't make it back, you've got what's left. Alex. I don't have to tell you to serve this country, this president, and these men with honor and ability, because I know you will. That's why you're where you are. I'm leaving you all six destroyers, twenty-five TACs here and up and down the coast, ten punchies, and seven of the U-boats. Use them and whatever comes back from this run tonight well." Krycek knew it was pointless to argue further, and he saluted as Leach stepped on board TAC-157.

Already on board was Leach's personal adjutant, Lieutenant Commander Lyle Waller. "Good evening, sir," said Waller, saluting. "I believe you've met this boat's skipper before, Lieutenant Torrance?"

"On several occasions, yes," said Leach, returning Torrance's salute. "I'm sorry to lumber you and your crew with my presence tonight, Lieutenant, since I know you'd rather be fighting those Jew-loving pirates out there than baby-sitting the big skipper, but unfortunately somebody had to draw the short straw."

"It's an honor to have you aboard and to have One-Five-Seven play a part in history tonight, Admiral," said Torrance in a firm, quiet voice. He gestured to three men standing at attention behind him on the deck. "This is One-Five-Seven's crew, sir. My first mate is Petty Officer Jim Vance, this is Torpedoman Al Briggs, and Seaman First Class Mike McCluskey."

"Good to be sailing with you tonight, men," said Leach. "All that gear set up in the pilothouse? Sorry about the tight squeeze."

"It's all up and running," said Waller.

"You remember all that techie stuff TWD taught you in case it goes down, Lyle?" asked Leach.

"Yes, sir, I know, we decided against the extra weight of a technical crewman," said Waller. "Sure you wouldn't have preferred to run the show from one of the destroyers out of Bremerton? They at least have a proper galley."

"We're going to need the few destroyers we have for sub-hunting," said Leach. "There are two missile subs out there in that task force that we're not going to be able to do a damned thing about from a TAC boat or a punchie, so long as they stay submerged. I don't want them creeping into the Puget Sound and launching a missile at point blank range that those Bluelight things may not be able to stop. We know the *Harriet Tubman* and *Jesse Jackson* are equipped to fire nuclear warheads. We have to find them and make sure they don't."

* * *

Eddie Horakova's 75-millimeter field gun was dug into a small scraped-out embrasure among some straggly pine trees, about eight hundred yards from the Black Buffalo Bridge over Grasshopper Creek. The emplacement was shielded from direct observation from the front by a small roll of terrain that was too minor to be called a ridge, but provided a good solid shield of rock and earth against ground fire.

The noise was incredible, like nothing any man there had ever experienced, or any modern Tolstoy could have described in writing. The Northwest artillery literally shook the ground, as did the incoming shells of the American tanks and cannon, some of which had struck and

destroyed NDF positions. An aid station had been set up back behind the ridge, and medevac Heeps with red crosses were crisscrossing the battlefield on the western side of Grasshopper Creek like angry beetles, sometimes taking fire themselves and rolling over as they wrecked. The thousands of small arms sounded like rain or hailstones rattling a tin roof that encompassed the entire sky. Eddie looked up from his semi-covered position, and before the sun went down completely he saw against the deepening blue sky a strange gray or brown shimmering in the air, almost like aurora borealis. It took him a while to realize that what he was looking at was a sheet of thousands of rifle and machine gun bullets whipping through the air.

There were NDF gun emplacements off to his right and his left, and behind him a self-propelled 88 had taken up a firing position on the crest of a hill, from which the crew blasted away. "That crew's pretty exposed, don't you think, Sarge?" asked Corporal Eckhart, jerking his head back towards the 88.

"See those guys hunkered down in the bushes off to the right and left?" said Horakova, nodding. "They're SAM teams. They've put that 88 up there as bait in case the helicopters come back, offering them a nice juicy target to lure them within range of the missiles."

"What about enemy artillery?" asked Gunther.

"You're a gunner, you ought to know how hard it is to hit a target right on a ridge line," said Eddie. "Your first shells almost always overshoot or fall short. Those guys are counting on us to take out any American guns before they make the range. Let's make sure we do." They already had done; in the first minutes at Grasshopper Creek, General Herb Smith, the American commander, had confidently sent forward his Abrams Tanks, his self-propelled M101 guns, and his 105-millimeter howitzers to try and cover his infantry from the deadly small arms fire, so they could break through the Northmen's center. So far, they had failed. It seemed the Americans could no longer hide behind plates of thick armor any more than they could hide in the sky.

The Americans had not only failed, but although the NDF men stretched out along the ridge and now in the woods along either side of the 4th Mechanized Brigade could not know the full extent of the damage, the enemy had been clobbered by the flight of twelve Luftwaffe

Songbird dive-bombers that had hit them twenty minutes before. The Songbird was a twin-engined propeller-driven plane slightly larger than the old German Stuka, but with a much tougher and more flexible construction that allowed for far greater wind shear resistance, g-force resistance and stress on the wings. They could land or take off on runways as short as 800 feet, and they could come in on a bombing dive at a screaming 300 miles an hour, drop a 250-pound SuperSem bomb down a chimney with pinpoint accuracy given a properly trained and skilled pilot, and pull out on a dime fifty feet from the ground. It was true that American F-15s or F-22s could have taken them out with ease, but thanks to Bluelight, no such American aircraft were available. Although dead slow by 21st century aviation standards, an airplane traveling at 300 miles per hour is still quite hard to hit with ground fire, as the American troops were discovering. The Songbirds had unloaded 24 250-pounders on the Americans, scoring a hit with each one, and the winding Valley Road as it descended from the hills toward the creek was now littered with burning Abrams tanks, artillery pieces, and trucks, not to mention dead GIs. General Herb Smith surveyed the damage done in the two-minute air raid up and down along the road with horror.

Ed Horakova and his crew relied for fire control on directions from the Eighth Battalion's forward observers, who were now lying in prone positions up ahead studying the small valley with their specially calibrated binoculars, which helped them to estimate distance. Eddie knew the head of the team personally, Sergeant Joachim "Dago" Degenkolb, because in civilian life he was a technical draftsman at the Northwest Steelcor tool and die plant where he and his father both worked. "All right, she's cooled off now," decided Horakova. His gun had been resting after the first 100 rounds fired for the mandated ten minutes in order to let the barrel and the breech block cool down, and also so they could stock up on more shells. A Ground Hog with a special suspension and shock absorbers had chugged up during the break, and the crew had helped the truckers unload case after case of 75-millimeter combat shells, four rounds per case. These they then broke open, and loaded the shells into their own side racks behind the cannon. The 75's combat rounds were lighter than the old World

War One version, because in the interest of less weight the cases were made of special hardened plastic, almost like big shotgun shells. There had been a debate over weight versus reloadability versus the amount of brass and steel necessary to use metal casings, and the General Staff had finally compromised. Practice rounds for the artillery range were made of brass and were reloadable, while the combat rounds were made of biodegradable plastic and disposable, thus increasing mobility and reducing the workload of troops on the battlefield who didn't have the time or the transport to pick up and haul thousands of empty shells back to the rear lines.

Horakova took off his fatigue shirt; even though it was almost dark, it was still hot as an oven. He kept his garrison cap with the eagle and swastika on, and over his ears the muffled headset that both contained his radio and muffled the sound of the shells firing so as to keep him from going deaf. He slammed a shell into the breech and got on his radio to Sergeant Degenkolb. "Fire control, this is two-eight. We're back up. Give us some niggers to shoot at."

"Sounds good, two-eight," came Degenkolb's voice over the radio. "We've got another self-propelled 101 coming out of the woods blasting. Two gun, lay on at 34 degrees azimuth and four degrees left from your position, adjust three clicks to the left, and give me a spotter round."

"Thirty-four up, four left, click three left," called out Horakova. Corporal Eckhart made a few adjustments on the weapon's battery-operated hydraulic aiming system. The gun barrel moved slightly up and to the left.

"Up!" he shouted back.

"Fire!" ordered Horakova. The gun gave what sounded like a heavy thud that vibrated through the ground to the crew, all of whom were wearing earplugs so as not to be totally deafened. Horakova waited for a few second and said, "How's that, Dago?"

"Damn if you didn't clip one of his treads off!" crowed Degenkolb. "Okay, Eight Battery, all weapons, let's finish this bastard off! Give me five rounds of rapid fire from your present declensions, all of you!" The Eighth Battalion guns, three 75s and two 88s, sent 25 shells downrange in a matter of a few seconds. They were rewarded by a dull rolling thud

that they could hear even over the noise of battle. "Got him!" yelled Degenkolb into the microphone. "Nothing left but burning scrap!"

From his observation post behind a large and now bullet-scarred spruce tree further down the ridge, Colonel Alfred Packer got on his radio. "Okay, the sun's down. Right and left wings, are all battalions in position?"

"Affirmative, sir," came a chorus of reassurances over the radio.

"Sergeant Sedley, can our bird still see anything over there, or is it too dark?" asked Packer.

She shook her head, looking at her laptop. "The heat signatures from all the weaponry have been obscuring everything for a while, sir, but—no, wait, sir, I can see what looks like major heat moving to the south and north from the Valley Road. The Americans may have decided to wait until dark to try and begin their own flanking movement to get around us."

"Yeah, well, they're in for a surprise. They're gonna find us waiting for them in those woods and hills." Packer got onto his radio. "Right and left wings, looks like they're coming to you. Move forward and engage."

* * *

The inside of the pilothouse of TAC-157 was dark, with only the lights from the instrumentation for illumination. The whole fleet was running dark through the inky sea, with only two small running lights on the bow and stern of each vessel, absolutely necessary to prevent collisions between the Kriegsmarine vessels in the pitch-blackness of the moonless night. The sea was calm, which was a blessing because it enabled the attacking fleet to stay together and stay on course. "We couldn't do this in January or March," Lieutenant Torrance had commented once during the trip. All around them the men in the pilothouse could see the firefly-like running lights bobbing and occasionally dipping in the trough of a wave, and the long, low gray shadows of the TAC boats themselves. TACs were deliberately built low in the water, to keep their radar and gunnery profile as low as possible. The MACs were bringing up the rear.

The Operation Sea Lion assault fleet had crossed the deadly Graveyard of the Pacific, the Columbia Bar, with no difficulty due to their vessels' shallow draft, and was now about 45 miles out, halfway to the American fleet ahead of them, moving toward the enemy at a fairly steady twelve knots. There were around 225 TAC boats, many of them newly rushed off the dry docks at Bremerton and Portland in the past few months since the NAR had learned of the impending American invasion, with green crews and barely any sea trials. There were almost a hundred of the smaller MAC boats, some also with new crews.

Eight of the TAC vessels carried no torpedoes, but were specially equipped with Bluelight projectors and crews, a last minute innovation in an attempt to prevent the fleet from being torn to pieces from the air. There had been no testing because at the time, the American satellite surveillance system was still up and running and the NAR didn't want to give anything at all away about Bluelight. Leach didn't even know for sure if the seaborne projectors would fire.

At the same time, the fleet had departed to attack Task Force Soaring Eagle, almost three dozen U-boats, small submarines roughly the size of their ancestors of World War One, had departed from their pens at Newport, Hammond, and Westport, and were now sailing southward towards the California coast. The submarines were too slow and easy for the American destroyers to sink to engage in open battle against the might of the U.S. Navy, but they could fulfill their traditional role as commerce raiders and start taking out some of the great Chinese container ships that kept Aztlan supplied with cheap manufactured goods of the kind they could not make for themselves. A dozen of the larger U-boats were headed even further south, to blockade the western approaches to the Panama Canal and cut into container ships from China and India headed for ports on the American east coast. Mighty Mart would soon be running low on unnecessary plastic objects.

On the downside, after much consultation and mental anguish, Leach and Basquine had decided not to risk any of the Luftwaffe's precious jet fighter-bombers on the American naval targets after all. The American ships' computer fire controlled chain guns and their variety of surface to air missiles would simply render the whole exercise a pointless act of hara-kiri. There would be enough sailors dying tonight

in head-on attacks against the floating fortresses, without adding the Republic's few jet combat pilots as well.

"Third Squadron is in contact now, Admiral," said Lieutenant Commander Lyle Waller. "Commodore Dalen's compliments, so forth and so on. They're about two miles off the port side."

"They made good time from Newport," commented Leach, drinking black coffee from a thermos flask. "Tell them to fall in. We've all practiced this maneuver on nights this dark and in worse weather, so they should be able to do it nice and smooth."

"They'll have to cut loose their MACs," said Waller. The TAC boats from the more far-flung bases had towed the missile-launcher boats from their bases so as to preserve the smaller vessels' limited methane fuel tanks.

Lieutenant Torrance spoke up. "Still, Phase One has been accomplished without a hitch, sir. We've managed to rendezvous over three hundred vessels, at night, in pitch darkness. And no sign of the enemy."

"Oh, they know we're coming, Lieutenant," said Leach grimly. "Or if they don't, they soon will. There are at least two AWACs planes on those carriers, and unless Warner is a blithering idiot he's kept one of them in the air at all times. Oh yes, they know we're coming."

"ETA within striking zone of the enemy in about three hours, sir," said Lieutenant Commander Waller. The long lines of low gray shapes continued to plow through the wine-dark seas, their methane engines rumbling into the deep.

On board the American flagship *John F. Kennedy II,* named after the carrier that had been destroyed and sunk in the Bremerton Navy Yard by the NVA during the War of Independence, Vice Admiral Hiram Warner listened to the report of his AWACs radar plane with some concern. "Say again? How many?" he demanded.

"Over three hundred small vessels, sir," came the voice of the AWACs pilot.

"Damnation!" muttered Warner. He turned to his XO, Captain Alvin Larsen, and said, "That's a lot of torpedo boats coming at our asses. How many F-14s and F-18s have we got left, Al?"

"Four on this vessel, three on the *Partman,* five on *Kitty Hawk*," said Larsen. "If we had our full complement and they didn't have those damned space alien ray gun things, we could gobble them up like sharks."

"Scramble our remaining planes and get them out there sinking as many of those nasty little bastards as they can," said Warner. "I hate to waste a fifty million-dollar Sidewinder on what amounts to a glorified motor launch, but I don't want all three hundred of those things coming at us at once. Tell the pilots to use depth-charged bombs as well as their missiles and strafing guns. Then once the planes are launched, begin dispersal and evasion maneuvers for the task force."

"We're *running* from a bunch of cheap-ass little boats that should be hauling tourist excursions across some bay, sir?" exclaimed Commander Rufus Washington, a large, very black, very nappy-headed man who was Soaring Eagle's RSM—Required Senior Minority officer, who had to sign off on all decisions made by the fleet commander and fleet executive officer.

"There are thirty-six vessels in this task force, Commander," said Warner patiently. He hadn't gotten where he was in the United States' service without acquiring the delicate but vitally necessary art for all Caucasian personnel of explaining himself slowly and clearly to bone-headed niggers and other minorities who had the power to impede and negate his work. "We are outnumbered over ten to one, by much smaller vessels, true, but each of which has at least one device on board, be it a torpedo or missile, which is capable of inflicting serious damage on our own ships and possibly sinking them, including the one we're standing on now. Evading a hostile enemy with the capability to destroy us in order to preserve the command and save American lives hardly counts as cowardice."

"What if the Nazis have those ray gun things on their torpedo boats now?" asked Larsen.

"Then we *damned* sure run!" said Warner. "We keep underestimating these people, like that stupid n . . . like General Rollins did at Sunset Beach," he hastily amended, remembering the presence of Washington. "I don't care how it looks. Three hundred of them on us all at once, they're bound to sneak a few torpedoes and missiles past us and get

some hits. Our mission is done here; our aircraft went out and most of them didn't come back, and if those computer jockeys in the Pentagon won't let us go ashore with our Marines and Seals and a naval land force and open a fourth front, then we're useless. I'd rather have a hasty and undignified exit on my record than the loss of an aircraft carrier."

Almost twenty minutes later Lyle Waller looked up from his computer screen on board TAC-157. "Bogies, sir, an even dozen of them, coming in low over the water. Looks like an attack run."

"Tell the Bluelight crews to . . ." began Leach.

"They already are, sir," said Waller. Almost a full minute later thin pencils of blue light zipped and flickered from here and there among the TAC boats. Fireballs exploded on the horizon, one, two, three, four. Then the rest of the American planes were on them, screaming over them in the moonless dark, chain guns blazing and missile trails snaking downward. Firey flashes across the sea to the horizon told of hits and detonating methane tanks, although not many, and burning debris and hot metal from the demolished American aircraft rained down into the water, throwing up hissing columns of steam. "Casualties, Mr. Waller?" said Leach. A piece of burning airplane wing hurtled into the sea not twenty yards from them and hurled a geyser of water across TAC-157's deck.

"Four TACs and a punchy gone, looks like, sir," said Waller after a while listening to the radio. "A number of boats hit and damaged but still seaworthy. Our vessels are searching the sea for survivors; hence the unavoidable use of searchlights, but the enemy obviously knows we're here anyway. The bogeys are coming back around for another run."

"I didn't know the United States Navy employed kamikaze pilots," said Leach with a grin in the dark.

Again, the blue beams nipped upward and the fireballs exploded in the sky, scattering burning and smashed metal and molten plastic all over the ocean. "No direct hits on our vessels this time, Admiral," said Waller after a while. "The last three bogeys are heading for their roosts."

"Too bad," said Leach. "I'd hoped to make a clean sweep."

* * *

General Herb Smith was decapitated by a shell fragment in the Black Buffalo valley at about the same time Admiral Leach's TAC boats were shooting down nine of the last dozen of the U.S. Navy's F-series fighter-bombers over the Pacific, and from then on things deteriorated for the American 4th Mechanized Infantry Brigade.

The battle for them to break out of the eastern end of the valley turned into a long extended mess covering many square miles, as the Americans at first tried to either overrun or outflank the 85th Regiment's center, then finally realizing they were on the short end of the stick, attempted to break contact and retreat back up toward Dillon. Although the diminishing strength of the American 4th Brigade didn't know it, the other two brigades of their invasion corps, amounting to almost 20,000 men, were pinned down in the town of Dillon itself by the French-speaking Régiment Charlemagne, the 43rd Infantry, and the 12th Panzer Regiment, aka the Rhino Riders after their new tanks. The NDF artillery was in the process of laying the entire town of Dillon, Montana flat, assisted by scouts and forward spotters from the townspeople themselves, who without hesitation called in NDF shellfire onto their own streets and homes rather than have those homes returned to the United States of America.

Eddie Horakova and his 75-millimeter gun crew spent most of the night firing on coordinates provided by their various forward spotters, almost never knowing or seeing what they were firing at. They fired at longer and longer intervals between, as the battle moved away into the woods and hills on the eastern side of Grasshopper Creek. About dawn, the order came to stand down and give their guns a thorough clean. By then the string of burning American tanks and military vehicles, mixed with a few from the NDF, and the litter of dead bodies from both sides extended around the eastern side of Black Buffalo Bridge in a seven-mile arc. Some of the Americans escaped and evaded in small groups, and a few made it back to their side of old Interstate 15, but from then on the 4th Mechanized Brigade became known to American military history as the Lost Column, a kind of Custer's Last Stand that kicked off a disastrous war.

* * *

"There's one thing we still apparently haven't mastered any more than the Americans have, Admiral," said Lieutenant Torrance, at the wheel of TAC-157.

"What's that, Lieutenant?" asked Leach.

"Meteorology, sir," replied the TAC boat skipper. He pointed through the front windscreen up at the sky. "Our weather reports still suck sometimes."

Leach looked up and saw the clouds overhead breaking apart, and suddenly the sea was flooded with bright light from a full moon. "Damn!" he swore.

"Damn is right!" replied Torrance tensely. "Look, sir!"

Ahead of them, the American fleet rose from the sea in the moonlight like gray metal icebergs, or like skyscrapers in the case of the carriers that towered over the tiny TAC boats. The Kriegsmarine had known they were approaching their targets, of course, since their radar had told them, and Leach had wondered aloud why the Americans, who must in turn have detected the Northwest boats on their own radar, didn't seem to be moving or attempting any evasive action.

But seeing the enemy ships all spread out before him under the moon, across miles of ocean, the answer suddenly struck Leach. "Arrogance," he breathed incredulously. "Pure American hubris. Even after everything that has happened in the Northwest since John Singer's neighbors in Coeur d'Alene came to his aid with weapons in their hands seventeen years ago; these stupid sons of bitches still don't get it. These men really believe that they are exceptional, that they are immune from the laws of history and nature, and that we poor wee pale peasantry can't ever really harm them."

"So let's harm them, sir," said Waller.

"Oh, do let's," said Leach. He picked up the radio mic and clicked a key that put him in touch with every vessel in the fleet. "This is the Big Skipper, boys. Operation Sea Lion, Phase Two commences now. This is the part where we send every last one of these scurvy dogs to Davey Jones' locker. *Do it!"*

Actually, Bloody Dave Leach was partially wrong about the American hubris. Vice Admiral Hiram Warner, Commander Larsen, and most of the senior officers in the American flotilla were not stupid

men. They fully recognized that in the 21st century a small boat was capable of carrying and using a weapons system of sufficient power to sink a warship of any size, and that over three hundred such small vessels attacking them at once was cause for concern.

Unfortunately for them, Commander Rufus Washington did not realize this. Washington was a large black man who had always towered over everybody else, including the skinny young computer geek whiteboys of his youth. He had the mindset of a typical black bully: small and white meant weak and contemptible. What had worked on the schoolyards of the expensive prep schools he had attended under affirmative action quotas would obviously work in combat against these racists, since Rufus Washington knew his whiteboys. The monkoid was constitutionally incapable of understanding that there could even *be* such a thing as a white man who was *not* afraid of him. He certainly had never met one. Plus he was the Resident Senior Minority on board, with a personal line to the President of the United States, quite literally, or at least to the Chief of Staff Ronald Schiff. A line he had used some minutes before evasive maneuvers preparatory to a return to Hawaii were to be implemented.

Just as the moon broke through the clouds, Admiral Warner was informed by a female communications officer, "Sir, I have the President on the line for you." As Warner took the phone into his hands, he looked out across the sea and saw hundreds of small dark shapes like a shoal of minnows moving towards his ships. Moving fast. Then faster.

President Hunter Wallace's voice was heavy with censure as he spoke from the bedroom of the executive residence in the White House, with Georgia Myers lying beside him, pretending to be asleep. "Admiral Warner, I have just been informed by my chief of staff that Commander Washington has felt it his duty to report that you are considering abandoning your position in the North Pacific for no other reason than . . ."

"I'll call you back," said Warner, hanging up the radiophone on its cradle. The ship's sirens were braying the call for General Quarters. "*Open up on them with everything we've got!"* roared Warner.

Then the first torpedo slammed into his flagship's side.

* * *

The politicians in the American War Cabinet who met in the White House situation room two days later were upbeat. They attempted to present the Battle of the Columbia Bar as a qualified success, or at least a draw. "It's true that our fleet sustained some serious losses," said Secretary of Defense Marcus Bagwell, desperately trying to spin the battle into a kind of 21st century Midway. "But the enemy losses were really tremendous. We estimate that we sank over a hundred of their torpedo boats. Some of our own vessels that were hit were merely damaged and are on their way back to Pearl Harbor, either under their own steam or else being taken in tow."

Admiral Hector Brava had the full casualty list in front of him, and he stood up in his seat, thrusting the papers at Bagwell. "You . . . call . . . this . . . *victory?*" he almost screamed at the Secretary of Defense. "Two carriers sunk, the *Hornet* and the *Hillary Clinton!* Three other carriers badly damaged! They don't think the *JFK II* will make it to Pearl, they think she's going to go under in a few hours! Three frigates sunk! Seven destroyers sunk! The *Jesse Jackson* driven to the surface and then rammed by one of those little fuckers, shot to shit with machine gun fire, the conning tower blown off with a missile and now under tow, and probably going to sink as well! The *Harriet Tubman* limping home on the surface, leaking at every seam from depth charges off those damned little Nazi boats and a possible reactor leak as well! Every other ship in the fleet without exception damaged! Damned near all of the task force's aircraft, including the helicopters and the AWACs, shot down by those space alien death rays or whatever the fuck they are! Seven thousand six hundred-odd American sailors and pilots dead, and all we did was blow away a few little pissant torpedo boats with three and four man crews, using missiles and weapons systems that cost a hundred times more to develop and manufacture and install and operate than the stupid little shitboats cost the Nazis to make! They're probably turning out more of the goddamned things in their shipyards now like lollipops, shipyards that we haven't yet touched with a single bomb or Tomahawk! How in God's name can you call this *victory?*" Brava roared.

Vice President Hugh Jenner had CNN on the big plasma screen. They were now truly the Cable News Network again, since Rotfungus

still had all the world's communications satellites in its grip. They had been able to reach about 50 percent of their pre-D-Day audience capacity so far by using fiber-optic cable and good old-fashioned broadcast television. The news was uniformly bad. The meeting was interrupted while Jenner and the Cabinet members watched live in horror as the stern of the *John F. Kennedy II* heeled over and disappeared beneath the blue Pacific waters. They learned later that Vice Admiral Hiram Warner had supervised the last crew evacuation into the lifeboats and then climbed back up to the bridge, electing to go down with his ship, thus giving the U.S. Navy pretty much the last in its long and proud history of legendary heroes.

Vice President Jenner cut away to Fox News, which was reporting that two Nazi U-boats had infiltrated San Francisco Bay, surfaced in broad daylight, and attacked the city. One had just finished shelling the crap out of several sections of the Oakland docks with his 2.5-inch deck gun, setting fire to a propane tank farm and several military warehouses at Carranza Barracks, formerly Oakland Army Terminal. The second U-boat commander proceeded in a leisurely manner to fire six torpedoes into ships tied up along the San Francisco piers, sinking two cruise vessels and one blazing tanker ship in their moorings. Then he shelled the Embarcadero for shits and giggles.

Jenner cut to MSNBC, and they saw an aerial view of the mountainous twists of Interstate Five just past Yreka, where long columns of black smoke mounting into the sky from the hundreds of burning vehicles. "The Mexicans haven't even crossed into the Emerald City yet," the Vice President said conversationally as Janet Chalupiak snorted in contempt. He switched channels again. The MSNBC copter showed brief segments of whirling dogfights between Luftwaffe Starfighters, the lightning-fast propeller-driven fighter-bombers with the nitro-injected alcohol engines that could hit speeds of up to 400 mph, and the Chinese Taipan helicopter gunships. Then the view shifted to a ground camera that showed the MSNBC news copter itself falling out of the sky in flames, riddled with Luftwaffe bullets.

"Those optics are terrible," said Angela Herrin decisively. "It's unpatriotic and giving aid and comfort to the enemy by making it look like they're actual soldiers who can defeat the United States military.

They're not, of course, but perception is what counts. We have to put a stop to the bad optics."

"And here I thought we had to put a stop to the enemy," said Admiral Brava. Angela Herrin ignored him.

"I'll call a meeting with major network heads as soon as I can get them all down to the White House," she went on. "I'll borrow Jimbo Hadding and some of his crew, in case I need some help persuading these media prima donnas who think they know what the truth is to remember their duty to their country."

"You know, Angela, you almost got sued last time you had Jimbo tune up a reporter," Schiff reminded her.

"But I didn't," said Herrin airily. "I had Agent Hadding tune up his lawyer as well, and Bob's your uncle. When did you know a reporter or an attorney who could stand up to a little slapping around? Besides, we're at war now and Hunter's got the War Powers Act. He can do whatever he wants, and so can I."

"Speaking of which, where is our illustrious commander-in-chief?" asked General Albert Scheisskopf dryly. "Ah, speak of the devil . . ." he said as Hunter Wallace strolled in the door, the faithful, hulking and sullen Secret Service bodyguard Hadding behind him. Wallace was in a good mood.

"Tell me some good news," he commanded cheerfully. At that moment, Marcus Bagwell's private cell phone number rang. Unbeknownst to any of them, the Zombie Master Dr. Shapira had obtained permission from Vinnie Skins to attempt to implement the repeated post-hypnotic suggestions that he had been implanting carefully in the mind of the Secretary of Defense for months. The Master was calling now from an untraceable number. Bagwell answered his phone. "Yes?" he said.

"Foghorn Leghorn," said the Zombie Master into the phone.

Marcus Bagwell dropped the device, stood up, placed his hands in his armpits, flapped his elbows, and ran from the room shouting *"Buck buck buck buck BU-GUUUUUUCK . . . . !!"* The President of the United States, the War Cabinet, and the assembled Pentagon brass stared after him.

Vice President Jenner spoke. "I don't think any of us expected that," he said.

* * *

Casualty summary : 0800 hours June 20th-0800 hours June 21st

NDF military casualties—1,870 dead and 5,291 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—418 dead and 1,907 wounded
United States military casualties—37,412 dead and 8,630 wounded
United States civilian casualties—20,226 dead and 12,348 wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents
Aztlan military casualties—45,445 dead, 17,275 wounded
Aztlan civilian casualties—42,598 dead, unknown number wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents

XVI

Tides and Hurricanes

(D-Day plus 12 days)

Never believe any war will be smooth and easy, or that anyone who embarks on the strange voyage can measure the tides and hurricanes he will encounter. The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events.

—Winston Churchill

Over the next two weeks of the steamy D.C. summer the war in the Northwest slowed to a crawl, while the United States government dithered, raged, recriminated, and intrigued.

Military and civilian casualties mounted slowly and grimly for the embattled Northwest Republic, but soared spectacularly for the United States and Aztlan. American bombing and indeed all aerial missions over the Republic ceased, at least until the U.S. Air Force could figure out how to deal with Bluelight. No solution was forthcoming either to the loss of American air power nor the loss of satellite surveillance; Rotfungus maintained its mysteries impenetrable in the face of efforts by every computer wizard the federals could throw at it. "I knew that lunatic Cord at Stanford," explained one exasperated software engineer. "He gets his theoretical insights from the Bible and astrology. We used to call him J.C., he thought it meant Jesus Christ, and he took it as a compliment! He's a fucking *kook*, so how could he come up with something like this that nobody can crack?"

"Maybe he gets it from his Esteemed Senior Colleague," replied a second man from MIT who had also known Cord.

One of the more interesting conversations that Georgia Myers overheard between the American president and his staff, and subsequently

reported back to Vinnie Skins and thence on to the NAR high command, concerned the apparent inability of the United States government to *replace* the hundreds of aircraft, the thousands of motorized vehicles, and naval vessels that had been destroyed by the NDF during the first two days of the war.

Put simply, the cupboard was bare. After a century of squandering the greatest national treasure trove of wealth and resources in human history on politically correct social experimentation, the United States of America was finally plain old flat-out *broke*, and was led by people who were bloody stupid enough to start a major war when the country was broke. Not a good combination. The U.S. had already been put on final notice by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and by the world's few remaining stable monetary systems: any more "quantitative easing," or printing of money by the Federal Reserve in order to pay for the war would result in the complete blackballing and delegitimizing of the battered American dollar and its removal from all internationally traded currencies in London, Geneva, Moscow, Buenos Aires, Beijing, Tokyo, and wherever else there was a stock market or financial futures exchange. The U.S. floated a special war bond issue as they'd done in World War One and World War Two. The bonds fell flat on their faces and were withdrawn after three days in sheer embarrassment. Everyone knew that the promise of the United States government to repay wasn't worth a bucket of warm spit. No one wanted to buy, sell, or trade in toilet paper.

Rotfungus continued to cripple the American satellite surveillance systems, although after the first week a massive effort on the part of the U.S. government, what remained of NASA, and the worldwide communications and entertainment industry who owned and operated many of the satellites, was able to re-route almost 95 percent of the world's electronic traffic through combinations of broadcast or fiber optic cable. At least the image of Hunter Wallace yapping like a Chihuahua was removed from most television and computer screens across the globe. Wags found to be posting the now famous image to the internet or broadcasting it were visited by gorilla-faced FBI and Homeland Security teams comprised mostly of African-Americans and Samoans. The humorists were beaten to a bloody pulp, their testicles

crushed, and left screaming on the floor of their homes, *pour encourager les autres*. The offenders' computer equipment was confiscated, as were all locatable assets in any bank accounts or money markets, as a fine to help the war effort. Only a few such examples sufficed to make sure that for the time being the President of the United States no longer barked at the moon, at least not on the internet.

The three American ground invasion columns had all come to grief. All three ground to a halt just barely inside the borders of the Republic, because they simply ran out of motorized transport. The NDF had destroyed it all. The American C-130 transport planes and helicopters didn't dare take off. Their trucks, their tanks, their Bradleys and Humvees were littered across hundreds of square miles of the inland Northwest in various stages of dilapidation from artillery shells, Songbird bombs, Starfighter rockets, and IEDs whipped up by Middle East veterans who had learned the technique from Muslim guerrillas in half a dozen exotic lands.

The U.S. Combined Military Group South was stalled at Anaconda, Montana, surrounded by A.J. Drones' Fourth Army, including the 85th Infantry Regiment, which in turn included Eddie Horakova's battery of field guns. Colonel Jason Stockdale made it a point to get down to Horakova's current position every day or so for a quick word to let him know that Stockdale had heard from his wife Jenny, and that Eddie and Bob Campbell's wives and children as well as Kevin and Tammy Myers and their baby were safe. They were living in a rural safe camp by the side of Crater Lake, Oregon, and they were all doing fine in the camp school and having fun. The kids thought it was all a great game and adventure.

Group Center was dug in and besieged by Zack Hatfield's Second Army at Fairfield, Montana. Group North, which had attacked through Canada with the connivance of the Canadian government, had only made it as far as Ponderay, Idaho, before they were halted and enveloped by the Third Army and the Florian Geyer SS Division, and forced to dig in. As Group North's commanding officer, U.S. Army Lieutenant General John R. "Jack" Falstaff, remarked bitterly to his chief of staff, Colonel Justin Nym, while the shells crashed all around their dugout: "Some asshole in the White House told those lickspittles in the media

that this would be World War Three on our side versus World War One on theirs. So why the hell are *we* the ones who are now stuck in trenches?"

Along the southern front, the news for the Allies was even worse. The NDF's First Army along old Interstate 5, commanded by General John Corbett Morgan from the border city of Medford, the Fifth Army of General Robert Gair out of Klamath Falls, and the Sixth Army out of Burns, Oregon, commanded by General Robert DiBella, had completely turned back the Mexican hordes in less than a week, reducing them to a panic-stricken rout. Significantly, after the first week of Bluelight and shoulder-fired SAMs and dueling with Luftwaffe Starfighters in and out of the mountain passes, the Chinese withdrew the bulk of their remaining combat helicopters southward out of the hot zones, lest they go back to Beijing minus almost everything they'd brought and with nothing to show for it. The Aztec generalissimo, Alfredo Galvez, made a flamboyant exit on June 30th by wrapping himself in the Mexican flag and blowing his own brains out as the SS closed in on his command post.

Acting on orders from the General Staff, none of the three Northwest armies posted on the Aztlan border had crossed into Aztec territory yet. Having driven the enemy back, they would fight a holding action in the south while the more serious American threat in the east and north was dealt with. Instead, the NDF all along the southern front were hovering on the border, bombarding everything that moved on the Hispanic side, conducting lightning commando raids and air attacks, while occasional V-3s still drifted lazily southward to drop a load of unpleasantness on Frisco, Sacramento, or Fresno.

Aztlan had almost fallen apart; Third World countries just don't have the infrastructure to survive a major military catastrophe. Local officials and government functionaries were no longer being paid and were turning predatory from Sacramento on south, with Los Angeles street gangs and rural *jefes* establishing themselves as Pancho Villa-style warlords throughout California. El Presidente was rumored to spend his time lying around his great palace in Los Angeles in his underwear, drunk and surrounded by naked prostitutes, while his clerical staff attempted to run the country. The once vibrant city of San

Francisco, officially deeded by the Aztlan government to a huge "gay community" in exchange for the largely white and Jewish perverts' admitted technical, financial, and administrative skills to keep the country running, had lost two thirds of its population owing either to death from phosgene and sarin gas, or else through flight away from the V-3s. The section of the white and Jewish entertainment industry that had remained in Hollywood was fleeing from southern California by private jet and yacht as order broke down completely and CNN showed their mansions in Beverly Hills, Santa Monica and Carmel being sacked and plundered by mobs of *campesinos*.

But the biggest military development in the past several weeks did not come from any of the battlefields. It was the sudden gas and biowar attacks against crowded U.S. population centers in Chicago, Cleveland, Miami, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, and St. Louis, when agents of the NAR released phosgene or sarin gas into the public transportation systems and weaponized anthrax into certain other target areas. Tens of thousands of people keeled over in subways, buses, public assemblies and buildings.

The bulk of the victims of these carefully planned chemical and bio strikes were non-whites, blacks who were doing nothing but cluttering up the landscape, and assorted Third World peoples who had no business anywhere in North America in any case. America's ruling class, for all of a century of political correctness, was still largely white and Jewish, and these had not been significantly attacked yet in their enclaves along the east coast. But the psychological effect of the covert ops attacks on the régime's power elite was definite. Although for some reason it hadn't gone down yet, they understood that what could happen in New Orleans or Philly could also happen in Georgetown or Manhattan or other Green Zones such as American Houston, and it was clear that the American authorities couldn't do much to prevent it.

The political blowback of the United States' increasingly obvious inability to protect its own territory and its own citizens from enemy attack grew ominous. The liberal and Jewish-controlled media screamed like banshees, railing at Hunter Wallace and demanding protection against "Nazi genocide" and a "third Holocaust." (Jews didn't like that term, maintaining that there had been only two Holocausts and

both belonged to them.) Frightened blacks, Hispanics, and other Third Worlders were no longer willing to eat and drink and shoot up their assorted government checks, remaining drunk and docile in their own neighborhoods. Like any herd of animals, they got spooked when they sensed danger, and they threatened to break out of their pens.

* * *

Needless to say the excitement of war and the stress of being combat bureaucrats produced an increase in demand for illicit meat and tobacco products among the Green Zone's élite; Vinnie Skins and his suppliers and his runners were working overtime, and not just on the spying end of their business. One day Lieutenant Robert Campbell, aka Richie from Chicago, was sitting in the office in the Arlington warehouse waiting for his car—he had one now—to be loaded up with cigarettes and coolers full of all-beef burgers and chicken leg quarters, when he asked the harried Vinnie Skins why there had been no chemical or biological attacks as yet in the two major American cities without which the United States could not function: New York City and Washington, D.C.? "I mean, it was Operation Applesmash in New York and Operation Pigkill here that finally drove the Americans to the Longview Conference," Campbell pointed out.

"Yeah, I know," Vinnie told him. "I was here for Pigkill. It's what got me this gig in the first place. As to why we haven't cut the cheese here yet, well, there's a couple of reasons for that. First off, these two cities are the most target-rich places in Amurrica for us, just like they were for the Muslims back in the day. D.C. and Jew York have always been where Amurrica does its really important business. Los Angeles used to be a third place, when the movie and entertainment industry was still there, and that's why we staged Operation We Are Not Amused back all those years ago. [See *The Brigade*.] But that also means that D.C. and New York have always been the most securely monitored, patrolled, and locked-down places in the whole country. You know the kind of surveillance we have to put up with over in the Green Zone, and it's the same in the more crucial parts of New York City, especially in Manhattan and the fortified towns in the Hamptons, where every

crack in the sidewalk has a security camera trained on it, not to mention various goon squads always within a couple of minutes' response time. That means that it's damned risky for us to make a move under the best of circumstances, and with the heightened wartime alert level it's even harder for us to gain access to the kind of targets that would make a strike worth it, plant whatever packages need to be planted, and then E&E successfully."

"That night tickle you guys pulled off outside the South African Embassy a few weeks ago went off seamlessly," remarked Bob.

"Yeah, well, we were lucky, and I wouldn't have tried that cowboy shit except in really urgent circumstances," Cardinale told him. "Our personnel resources Out Here have always been limited, even when things were more or less peaceful and we were operating under cover. The more people you have involved in any kind of covert op, the more that can go wrong. But now that the lid has blown off and the régime here has gone into full-blown paranoia mode, it's going to be even harder for us to escape detection. In fact, I'm thinking of closing this warehouse down. It's too well known, and some asshole over there at the FBI might get the idea of cracking down on organized crime as part of doing their bit for the war effort or some such crap.

"Secondly, strikes in the Green Zone here and the high end of Manhattan will produce a lot more in the way of white casualties than what we've been doing so far," Cardinale continued. "We've been preparing for this day for years, of course, and we have some plans we're working on right now which we'll roll on when we get the word, but even here and now with the situation like it is, we're under orders to try and keep white casualties as low as possible. Whites are a minority in the U.S. now, but even so, a lot of the individuals we gas on the Metro or blow up in their office buildings are going to be ordinary white people, folks who are working for the government just to try and get a paycheck and raise a family and keep some kind of decent home."

"Then they should be doing it in the Homeland!" said Campbell angrily. "That's what the Republic is for!"

"Nice ideological answer, but in real life things aren't all that cut and dried," said Cardinale. "It's like the whites who fought against us during the war, the first war I suppose I should say now. There is still

such a thing as an average American, God help the poor dumb bastards. A lot of them aren't bad people in themselves; they're just idiots who seem to have some weird fucking blindness hard-wired into their brains, so they can't see what's going on around them. They just don't *know* any better than to believe whatever horseshit the goddamned United States and the Jew liberal media tell them. They've never been allowed to hear any other point of view, they have been told we're monsters in human form, and they've never questioned any of it. They never had the mental and moral equipment to question any of it, because this filthy system made sure they didn't. It's all very well to say, 'Well, they should have been smart and figured it all out on instinct like the first Northwest Volunteers did,' but they didn't. Their brains have been dulled, but they're not evil, and they don't deserve to die just for being dummocks whose minds are more on their kids or paying their bills or their other immediate concerns, than on trying to figure out what makes the world they live in tick. Most people simply aren't that complex and analytical. Not everybody can be a George Lincoln Rockwell or a William Gayley Simpson.

"Anyway, even if these people may be a write-off, what about their children?" asked Cardinale. "They're part of our racial gene pool too, and there aren't enough of us left on this planet so we can write them off, or any other group of white people. Do we want another whole generation of white children to grow up hating and fearing so-called Nazis, hating the Northwest Republic because their father or mother died in a bombing of a government office or a gassing on a subway platform?"

"Yet President Morehouse has ordered that no prisoners from the invading armies be taken," pointed out Campbell.

"That's different," said Cardinale, shaking his head. "Those are soldiers who joined the American military voluntarily, in search of a paycheck, and also for the last medical insurance and retirement that exists in American society since Social Security went belly up. They sought those benefits knowing full well that they would be expected to earn them by spilling the blood and taking the freedom of people of their own race in the NAR. That's unforgivable, and the State President

is right to decree that anyone who does that, anyone who sets foot in our country in order to do harm, has to die.

"But we're talking big picture stuff here, Rich. We're going to win this war, I can tell you that. I can feel it. Our two big secret weapons have worked, we've knocked the Americans out of the sky both physically and visually, and without their toys, they're done for. That's great, and I intend to help any way I can and kill anybody I have to in order to make that victory happen. I don't deceive myself as to the result. Twenty years from now, there aren't going to be millions of young white people walking around saying 'Gee, thanks Northwest Republic, for *not* gassing my mom or my dad in their cubicle at the Department of Labor during the war! You Northmen guys are all right!' It's just a matter of keeping the level of hatred and fear and mistrust this war is going to engender in the non-racially-aware white population of North America down as much as possible, so that someday maybe we in the Republic can be reconciled to the millions of our people who either chose to stay here, or in most cases simply never thought to leave for Home because the Jews programmed their brains not to.

"You'll notice that the cities we've hit with our witches' brews are almost entirely niggerized and beanerfied," Cardinale pointed out. "Some of those places where our teams have let a deadly fart, like Detroit and Atlanta and Baltimore, have gone completely feral under years of black rule. There's no industry or infrastructure left to destroy there, nothing of value, just packs of wild black animals roaming in the ruins, and some gook storekeepers who make a living relieving them of their welfare money. The only whites in danger in Detroit or Atlanta or New Orleans are those stupid enough to wander into the primates' habitat. We've launched biochem attacks on those cities, sure, but mostly for psychological and eugenic reasons."

"Psychological and eugenic?" asked Bob. "Psychological warfare I get, but I'm not with you on the eugenics."

"Culling the herds, young man, culling the herds," said Cardinale. "Most of the population in all-black or all-Hispanic areas is very young, and so it follows that by attacking those areas and killing as many of them as we can, we're not just killing X thousand niggers or beaners, we're killing all the hundreds of thousands of picaninnies and bambinos

they *might* have bred, and their grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc. What put the white man on the road to demographic extinction back in the twentieth century?" asked Vinnie in a professorial tone. "Our participation in two hideous world wars between the European peoples, to the point where untold millions of white children all across the world were simply *never born*, because their fathers and mothers and grandparents died on the Somme or at Anzio or in the Dresden and Hamburg firestorms, so forth and so on.

"What kept us from being physically overrun by literally billions of niggers and gooks during the late 20th and early 21st centuries? A series of brushfire wars in Africa and Asia such as Mao's Cultural Revolution, Vietnam, Biafra, Rwanda, Darfur, and of course, the mass disease and starvation in Africa that came from the blacks' complete and total inability to cope with the modern world and take care of themselves. If it hadn't been for those natural culls, the world would be all black and yellow today instead of mostly black and yellow like it is. Sorry, I'm rambling, but the fact is that's another reason we need to try and keep white casualties on all sides as light as possible during this war—if we can wipe out large numbers of mud people while preserving what's left of the shattered white gene pool as much as we can, we might be able actually to start re-balancing the demographic scales at some point in the future.

"That's one reason we haven't hit New York and D.C. with alternate warfare," Cardinale went on. "The second reason is so we can scare the hell out of the remaining responsible elements in this country and make sure that after we have well and truly whipped them down into jelly, when Red Morehouse generously offers to call off the dogs, he has a stick as well as a carrot to offer. We need to make it clear to the ruling élite of the United States that we are entirely capable of destroying what they have left, and if they want to keep it, they'd damned well better make peace on whatever terms our State President decides to offer them, when the time comes. And it will."

"But you're planning some attacks here?" persisted Campbell. "I'm in, sir. I mean it. The invaders have been stopped, but they're still on our soil. My family is in Montana, and I have no idea what's happened to them. I keep thinking of Millie and my children in . . . in some kind

of situation . . ." Bob clenched his fist, hard. "I'm here and I can't help them. I should be out there in Anaconda with my X-3, making damned sure those animals don't get anywhere near them. But if I can't shoot them like a soldier I'll damned sure gas them or poison them!"

"I get that, son," said Cardinale with a nod. "But you in turn need to get that right now, you among all our millions of soldiers are doing the one thing that might be the most important job of any one of us, the mission that might save us all. You are helping that brave girl in that cesspit on Pennsylvania Avenue tell us what those murderers are up to in time for us to stay one step ahead of them. By warning us of those paratroop drops alone, she saved thousands of Northwest lives. Now, how is the Beautiful Lady holding up?"

"She's running on raw nerves and God knows what else," said Bob grimly. "She's losing weight and she's starting to look haggard around the eyes and mouth from not sleeping. She's admitted to me that sometimes the urge to light up a joint at least, or to start drinking again, is becoming almost overwhelming. The stress is getting to her. The White House is full of new security procedures, all kinds of strange spooks from half a dozen agencies roaming up and down the halls, huddled over computers in cubbyholes and whispering to one another in corners. They're getting more and more frantic and paranoid, the clearer it becomes each day that the United States is losing the war. They're looking for scapegoats. The FBI is re-vetting everybody who works at Sixteen Hundred, complete new security workups and background checks. Georgia being born in Montana is raising eyebrows again, and she thinks the Secret Service is trying to get her kicked out before her contract is up. That head agent, the ex-Fattie, Lyons, has never liked her being there. Fortunately, she was completely clean from their point of view until I knocked on her door a couple of months ago. They'd just finished going over her background with a fine-toothed comb. They found a lot of bad craziness but nothing political, and that's all they'll find now."

"The possible relapse into drugs and booze worries the hell out of me," said Cardinale. "It worries the hell out of Jake Shapira, too."

"It really sounds funny referring to a comrade by a Jewish name," said Campbell, shaking his head in bemusement. "When this is all over, somebody needs to tell me the doc's real name."

"I don't know it, and he may not remember it," said Cardinale. "Out Here you can end up losing yourself in your cover and forgetting who you really are. No kidding. I've been Vinnie Skins for so long that I swear I have these vague memories of my childhood in New Jersey that never happened. Be glad you're only Out Here for the short term. When you get back Home, you may find yourself thinking and acting like Richie for a while. I hope your wife is understanding."

"I don't know what she'd think of Richie the Buttlegger, but I damned sure know what she'll say about these tattoos!" said Campbell, lifting his be-Lila'ed arm. "Speaking of which, I know we're not supposed to act curious about fellow team members, but Betsy's let some things slip over the past couple of months that give me the impression there's a story there. She said once she's never even been back Home since she was a kid. How is that possible? I mean, she'd have to go back to go through SoI on Whidbey Island, at least?"

"Betsy never went to SoI," said Cardinale, shaking his head. "We recruited her locally. Fortunately for us, she's turned out to be a natural. Yeah, there's a story there, and I suppose you ought to know it, just so you don't end up putting your foot in it with her. She's from a little town out in eastern Washington called Wheeler, or it *was* called Wheeler. It was out near Moses Lake somewhere."

"Was?" asked Bob.

"Yeah, was. It's gone now," Cardinale told him, "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dynamited all the buildings, burned what they could, and bulldozed the rubble into a landfill during the last year of the war. I don't know if the Republic ever rebuilt it. The NVA had an active company out there, attached to the Yakima Brigade. Can't remember the details, never got down that way myself, but that particular crew specialized in whacking Indians. They used to leave cards at their hits saying it was revenge for Kennewick Man or some such. They shot some self-proclaimed chief of the Hunkapoop tribe or whatever, coming out of the liquor store just outside the res, of course. Turned out this redskin was a real favorite with the liberal media back east here, kind of their official Native American Mascot from the Racist Northwest."

"And here I thought we were all Native Americans, by virtue of being born here," sneered Bob.

"Not if you're the wrong color, no," said Cardinale. "Yeah, that one always used to get my back up as well. Anyway, when Chief Running Nose was sent to the happy hunting ground, there was all kinds of screaming and hollering about wicked white men completing the genocide of the noble red man, all that happy horseshit. The Volunteers who did the deed were out of reach, but the political pressure was on for the feds to do *something*, jump up and down and shit snowballs, whatever. So the FATPOs moved in and arrested the entire population of Wheeler, which was four or five hundred people, and deported them all to the FEMA camps in Nevada."

"Oh, Jesus!" said Bob, shaking his head. "I've heard of those camps. Let me guess. Was Betsy . . . ?"

"She was," said Cardinale grimly. "She was about thirteen at the time, so she was considered too old for It Takes a Village, her mind being already corrupted with wicked racism and the King James Bible, so forth and so on. So she got to go along for the ride. Betsy and her mother and her little brother were dragged out of their house around dawn and thrown into the back of an eighteen-wheeler along with about seventy other people, standing room only, and then they hit the road south. No stops along the way, at least not for the deportees. By the time the truck got to the camp in Pahrump, only about half of the people in the truck were still alive, and Betsy's brother was dead. Heat and dehydration. The child was about six, I think. Betsy's mother died a few months later of the same causes plus malnutrition, starvation, intermittent beatings, and occasional bouts of interracial gang rape at the hands of the guards, most of whom were nigger and Mexican military stockade inmates, acting as trusties under the so-called supervision of the army MPs. Once her mother died, Betsy was left there on her own. Do you want me to go on?"

"No, sir," said Campbell. "I'm sorry I asked. I won't say anything to her to let on that I know. We all know some Mandingo older women back home. There's a rule that we somehow get taught, but it's so subtle that most of us can't even remember where we learned it. I know I can't."

"*Say nothing, remember everything*," quoted Cardinale. "Yes, I've heard it, and it doesn't just apply to Mandingo experiences. Anyway, Betsy

ended up here in D.C. through a series of events I won't get into, and we were lucky enough to pick her up. The reason Betsy has never been Home is that she feels she has nothing to go Home to."

"That's not true, sir!" said Campbell sadly. "She has the land we made out of what we took from them to go home to. She can start over. That's what the Republic is *there* for, for Christ's sake!"

"Maybe someday she will," said the older man. "Right now she doesn't see it that way. She's into the whole lifelong revenge thing, and you're right, you do *not* talk to her about any of this. We can't give that girl much in exchange for all she does for us, but we can damned sure give her respect!"

* * *

On the first day of July, White House Press Secretary Angela Herrin sat in the Oval Office with her shapely legs crossed, speaking to the President of the United States as if he were a small, stubborn child. "Mr. President, you *must* begin to think seriously about the Apocalypse Option," she said. "The war so far has been an unmitigated disaster. Every day, half measures are being conclusively proven not to work. The effect on everything from our national morale to our economy has been catastrophic, not to mention the fact that your re-election prospects for a third term are now in serious jeopardy."

"My re-election is in the bag," said Wallace with a confidence he did not really feel. "No nation is going to change horses in midstream in the middle of a major war like this."

Angela sighed. "Mr. President, you are speaking as if the actual vote totals in an American general election have any relevance to the result. We both know that hasn't been the case for several generations."

White House Chief of Staff Ronald Schiff spoke up firmly. "Sir, you seem to be forgetting who counts the votes, and who constitutes the majority shareholders in the Diebold Corporation that manufactures and controls the voting machines, not to mention the fact that the CEO of Diebold is Mordecai Eshkol, an Israeli businessman who will not be impressed with any apparent lack of political will to deal with this Nazi abomination in the Pacific Northwest."

"What, so you guys are threatening me now?" demanded Wallace, a bit of bluster in his voice. "How soon they forget! I've been a friend of the Jewish people all my life, ever since I was running my own little racist internet operation back in the 'teens and voluntarily sending every name and address and bit of information I picked up to the ADL and the Southern Poverty Law Center, just to let you know whose side I was on!"

"We remember, and we're very grateful, sir," purred Angela. "But this is a crucial moment in our history, and we need for you to come through for us in the one way that will ultimately count. We need you to destroy our enemies for us. Think of your legacy, sir! You know how grateful we can be to those who come through for us when it counts. By 1940, Winston Churchill was a washed-up, brandy-soaked has-been, out of office and out of the mainstream, who was detested even by his own party as an amoral hack without a principle to his name. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was on the verge of being impeached for trying to pack the Supreme Court with his own personal flunkies, even as he was reviled for having created the beginnings of a welfare state that, even then, wise heads knew would lead to serious trouble and danger to the nation someday, while at the same time he failed to end the Great Depression. But those men came through for the Jewish people and took down Hitler for us, and so to this day, they are regarded as veritable saints throughout the entire civilized world. It's just smart politics to stay on the right side of the people who control and shape the narrative, and who write the history books, or nowadays the history movies and TV."

"Senator Nivens has already indicated to us in private that he would be in favor of using the Apocalypse Option," remarked Schiff casually.

"Oh, I get it," said Wallace irritably. "I give the order to nuke the Northwest or else the Jewish lobby will switch their support to Nivens at the One Nation Indivisible convention in August?"

"You can't win a third term if you're not nominated, sir," said Schiff with a truly Yiddish shrug of his shoulders.

"In case you hadn't noticed, we don't even know if the Apocalypse Option is on the table!" said Wallace. "These ray gun things have

knocked down almost all the Cruise missiles that have been fired at the Northwest Republic, or entity, or sewing circle, or whatever we're calling it this week. We don't even know that nuclear ICBMs will get through! The nearest silos are in Kansas and Minnesota. That's plenty of warning for the Nazis to focus those whatever-the-hell-they-are weapons. So once we've shot our final bolt and it fails, what then?"

"How will you look to the country by August, by which time you will have lost at least one of the armies you sent into the Northwest completely and maybe all three, and there may be Nazi tanks rolling toward the convention hall in Chicago?" asked Angela urgently. "Sir, I know a nuclear strike will be a hard sell, but hard sells are what you do best! Your speech to the convention *must* be a victory speech!"

"And what about the ray guns?" asked Wallace.

"I admit, we don't even know if Apocalypse will work now," said Angela. "There's only one way to find out. We fire our entire nuclear arsenal at all their cities, maybe two dozen each on Seattle and Portland to make sure at least one gets through, multiple missiles against lesser cities like Spokane and Boise and Eugene and Corvallis, you get the idea."

Wallace scowled. "What about the fallout and collateral damage of a nuclear hit on Seattle to Vancouver, British Columbia? How do you think Prime Minister Simoneau and the international community will react to that? How about all those Jews you mentioned who live in Vancouver, all those Israeli survivors you were so worried about being traumatized?"

"The Jewish community in Vancouver is being quietly evacuated, and has been since the beginning of the war," replied Schiff calmly.

Wallace almost let fly with a remark about rats leaving a sinking ship, but he choked it back through lifelong force of habit. "Okay, how about Montana and northern Idaho? What about our own troops who are dug in and surrounded and outnumbered by enemy armies, troops we can't even resupply because we can't reach them by air or by ground? Hundreds of thousands of men, and the biggest problem isn't even combat casualties. Do you know that Scheisskopf estimates Group South can hold out for less than a week on what food and water they

have remaining, and the other two armies at Fairfield and Ponderay are in just as bad a shape? What about them?"

"Give them a Fourth of July present, Mr. President!" urged Angela, her eyes sparkling at the thought of mass slaughter of anti-Semites. "Launch America's nuclear arsenal of democracy on the birthday of our nation!" (Angela was forgetting for the moment that she had been born in Israel.) "At the same time the mushroom clouds go up, order a massive breakout offensive on the part of all three of our besieged army groups! The Nazis will be in shock and awe, reeling from the destruction of their cities and their industries and their families! Maybe God will even stop the sun in its tracks once more so our *godel hadorim* can keep on killing the Jew-hating bastards!"

"You want me to order a massive nuclear strike against the Northwest on the Fourth of July?" laughed Wallace. "I have to admit, that would be one hell of a fireworks display!"

There was a knock on the door of the Oval Office. "Yes?" called Wallace, Georgia Myers walked into the room. "Five o'clock, Mr. President," she announced pertly, as if she were reminding him of a perfectly ordinary appointment. "I see you're busy. Want me to come back?"

"Give us ten more minutes, Ms. Halberstam," said Wallace, as if she were a perfectly normal secretary.

"Sure." Georgia left, closing the door behind her, but when she had approached it had been slightly ajar, and she had heard Wallace's last remark. She slipped into the ladies' room down the hall, selected a stall on the end nearest the wall which she had carefully determined was out of range of the new camera installed by the Secret Service and DHS despite the ferocious protests of the female staff, and quickly texted out a coded message to Bob Campbell on her phone, which she concealed in a color picture of Snuffles, a pot-bellied given to President Wallace by a little girl in Iowa that had become the official White House mascot.

"*Shit!*" said Campbell in his car, once he had decoded the message. He pulled over on his way to a barbecued chicken delivery to DuPont Circle long enough to pass the message on to Birdie, who passed it on to Vinnie Skins, who passed it on to Fort Lewis. The expletives that echoed through the NDF General Staff within the hour, on learning

that the Jews now threatened their country with nuclear mass murder, were far stronger than Bob Campbell's monosyllable. About two hours after Georgia had sent her text, Vincent Cardinale got a coded top priority order, on paper of all things, through an archaic device on his desk known in the late twentieth century as a fax machine. It was so old that the DHS and FBI no longer bothered to try and detect or decrypt fax-modulated land line signals; no one there remembered them, or remembered what to look for.

Vinnie knew his own codes well enough so he didn't have to use his key. The order was simple: *We have to send a message. Cack those kikes.*

Cardinale nodded grimly, and quickly coded and sent his reply: *It's done.*

* * *

Casualty summary: June 22nd-July 1st

NDF military casualties—3,712 dead and 7,880 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—1,912 dead and 3,740 wounded
United States military casualties—25,909 dead and 19,336 wounded
United States civilian casualties—101,456 dead and 302,348 wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents, casualties overwhelmingly non-white
Aztlan military casualties—Est. approx. 170,000 dead, 115,000 wounded
Aztlan civilian casualties—Est. approx 261,500 dead, unknown number wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents.

XVII

A Piece of the Fox's Hide

(D-Day plus 14 days)

When the hide of the lion will not reach, it must
be patched with that of the fox.
—Lysandros of Sparta

On the third day of July, the Northwest Republic's State President, Red Morehouse, stood on a rise at the edge of the Lost Creek Forest in his camouflage fatigues. He slowly panned his binoculars over the besieged town in the distance. Morehouse could see the muzzle flashes of the Northwest army's massed artillery firing all up and down the long valley, while inside the American-occupied town he could see the shells striking and flashing, and geysers of dirt and masonry and wreckage shooting high into the air, as well as occasional human bodies. Around Morehouse were parked the three Ground Hog-mounted projectors of a Bluelight battery, escorting his mobile command post to take care of any Predator drones or Tomahawk missiles that might amble by with the intent of whacking the Republic's head of state. He was surrounded as well by the SS company from the Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler that served as the presidential protection detail in time of war. But there was no enemy nearby. Bluelight had swept Hunter Wallace's missiles and aircraft from the sky, and his soldiers were boxed in down in the valley, where they were being slowly slaughtered.

Almost 75,000 U.S. Army soldiers and Marines, the bruised and exhausted remains of the U.S. Combined Military Group South that had so proudly rolled out of Billings several weeks before for what they thought would be Baghdad Boogie, were dug into an area of about nine square miles of Anaconda, Montana, where they hunkered down

in whatever cover they could find and crawled through the rubble of the town. Their lines of trenches, earthworks, barricades and hasty fortifications ran roughly along Cable Road to the north through the old golf course, and along the Stumptown Road to the south as far east as Smelter Road. Everything in between was a kill zone for the NDF and the Luftwaffe.

The mining and steel processing town of Anaconda, the only important Northwest industrial and administrative center to fall to the American enemy, was set in a heavily forested, mile-high valley in Deer Lodge County, surrounded by the Pintler Mountains right on the Continental Divide. Anaconda's 15,000 inhabitants had been evacuated in time. The Americans had captured an empty town with the electrical and communications grid disabled and the water and sewer mains blown to pieces by the NDF troops who had just left hours before. The stores and private homes were stripped of virtually everything to eat and drink, except for the odd bottle of beer and spring water left lying around, some of which were poisoned and some of which weren't. The bewildered Americans had captured their first objective all right, but almost all of them were now on foot and exhausted after a hellish march in heavy kit and body armor through baking Montana heat, and they barely had time to get their bearings when the first shells from the Fourth Army's artillery batteries concealed in the Lost Creek and Deer Lodge ranges began dropping on them.

It took the Americans only a short while to realize that they were surrounded by an army that outnumbered them three to one, that there would be no re-supply by air, and that there was no food and above all very little water, while their enemies could draw as much water as they wanted from Georgetown Lake, Warm Springs Lake, and a hundred other small lakes and streams scattered throughout the nearby mountains. Their commanding officer, U.S. Army Major General Bentley G. Logan, immediately ordered a breakout attack to the east, back the way they came. He led the U.S. Army's First Cavalry Division, the First Mechanized Infantry Division, and two battalions of the Fifth Marine Division in a drive for Bowman Field, the local airport, where they hoped to establish an air supply point and a medevac point for their wounded, even if getting planes and copters through would be

the next problem. They captured the airfield, if it is possible to capture an open expanse of potholed concrete wherein every building had been dynamited or burned to the ground. Then the hail of artillery shells cut Logan off completely from the rest of his command; he and the remnants of his force were still dug into trenches they had hastily slashed into the ground around Bowman Field.

Morehouse and the Fourth Army commander General A.J. Drones had not hesitated for an instant to order the destruction of one of the Republic's own cities that was defiled by the presence of a single armed nigger or Mexican. The NDF had been bombarding Anaconda for almost five days now, with over two thousand artillery pieces and multiple rocket launchers, hundreds of Starfighter and Songbird aircraft, and mortars beyond counting. What was once the downtown area of Anaconda was now a burning slagheap, which even now as the State President watched was being churned up by the slow pounding of the shells. All along the siege lines, the Northwest cannon were firing in slow sequences to conserve ammunition; they had all the time in the world. Each battery dropped ten shells on a certain grid coordinate called in by the forward spotters, or in some cases the rear spotters high on the wooded ridges of the foothills above the valley, which afforded a better view. Then the next battery down the line did the same on another coordinate, until the wave came back around again. The result was an almost lazy but constant rain of explosives and incendiaries on the town, twenty-four hours a day, all day and night, for five days straight so far. The Americans were not only short on food and water; they had to be getting very little sleep. The barrage had slowly and leisurely disassembled the entire town; barely one brick remained standing on another, and the Americans were huddled in trenches or cellars or gutted ruins with no way to fire back and silence the constant thudding guns.

The lack of their air power and satellite surveillance had allowed the poor quality of the American troops and the low caliber of officers and leadership, for many decades always hidden behind a screen of high-tech razzle-dazzle, to come to the fore. Now the U.S. military paid the price for generations of political correctness, tactical laziness, and moral corruption. Low-tech in sufficient quantity and with guts

behind it was trumping high-tech manipulated by monkeys. Man was triumphing over machine, courage over the computer. World War One was indeed defeating World War Three.

Most of the trees throughout the valley had been knocked down by various kinds of ordnance over the past few days, and large numbers of troops from the 350,000-man Fourth Army weren't even engaged in combat, but were on firefighting duty putting out the dozens of brushfires that threatened to spread from the battle zone. The sight spread out below Morehouse now resembled a shell-blasted moonscape that shimmered in the July heat even through the smoke and the dust thrown up by the NDF artillery shells. "How long before those poor bastards run out of water, you think, General?" Morehouse asked A.J. Drones, a wiry man with a drooping blond moustache laced with gray who stood at his side.

"No telling, Mr. President, but they're starting to get desperate," said Drones. "Some of the white soldiers are starting to crawl out of their positions at night, trying to surrender. We shoot 'em down as per order. I would imagine a shortage of food and water is largely in play with that."

"Any chance of reconsidering your *deguello*, Mr. President?" asked Security Minister Frank Barrow, also standing beside Morehouse with a pair of field glasses. "Those men down there are our enemies, granted, but a lot of them are of our own race."

"Not with this lot," said Morehouse. "Frank, believe me, I've lost sleep over that, and I'm going to lose more now that I've seen what those men are enduring, no matter what color they are. But the United States of America has sent three invading armies into our land, and we *dare* not show weakness or hold our hand. We have to completely destroy at least one of those armies in order to make our point, so that when we do show mercy to the white men among the other two, the world will know that's what it is, mercy and not weakness. If we can, we'll offer the white soldiers of Group Center and Group North a chance to live—but to do so, they'll have to acknowledge their own blood, maybe for the first time in their lives, and abandon their niggers and their mud-colored allies. That's the political point we have to make, and make them understand. We have to force them to accept their lives at

our hands *as white men,* and not as soldiers of an illegitimate interracial tyranny. That's what history must record, that we showed mercy not to Americans, but to our own blood brothers. So what have you come all the way out here to tell me?"

"This is sufficiently sensitive so I didn't want to entrust it even to a secure line, sir," said Barrow. "We've got word from Station Cesspool. Major Cardinale says he's worked out a plan to take down both of Wallace's *Hofjuden,* but he warns us that Belladonna herself may be compromised, and he's very twitchy about that, as well he might be. We can't afford to lose her. He's asking for confirmation to proceed."

"Those two Jews are urging the President of the United States to use nuclear weapons against the Northwest American Republic," said Morehouse. "Hunter Wallace is a clever politician but a weak man. He thinks only in terms of political expediency. The morality of slaughtering hundreds of thousands and maybe millions of his own race at the behest of Jews is something that simply will not enter into his calculations. I can't take the risk that he will allow himself to be persuaded by those hebes. We must not only remove him from their sphere of influence, but we have to let him know through their death that we know what they've been up to, and if he even so much as *thinks* about pushing that button he's next, and not the entire might of the United States can save him from our wrath. The man is a personal coward and we have to hope that the death of his two little Jewish handlers will concentrate his mind. I realize the risk to that brave young woman in the White House, but I have a whole nation and a whole new generation of white children to think about, children whom I will not allow to die of nuclear incineration or radiation poisoning. No more Dresdens, Frank. No more Hamburgs or Colognes, no more *Wilhelm Gustloffs*, not *ever,* at least not without an Aryan revenge that will shake the very heavens! But we don't want revenge, we want live white children, and that means we have to stop it before it can happen. Tell Cardinale he's got my okay, and I don't mean just the two Jewish advisors. From now on he's got my okay to take out Wallace himself if the opportunity offers."

"You want to turn Belladonna from an intel to an assassination mission, sir?" asked Barrow.

"Yes, if it's feasible, and if there is at least a chance to extract that girl and get her out of there alive beforehand," said Morehouse with a nod. "In the past two weeks I have had to order thousands of men to their deaths, but I won't do that to her. That would be a damned foul way to repay what she's done for us, and I still intend to maintain at least some shred of pretense that we're better than they are. Tell Vince it's a go on taking out Wallace, but he prioritizes Belladonna's safety and her extraction, with her child."

"Wallace would kill you without a second's hesitation if he could, sir," offered Drones.

"I know, Andrew, but that's not why I'm giving this order," said Morehouse. "The thought of using those nukes has now crossed his mind, and no American president who has ever had such a thought even so much as cross his mind can be allowed to live. It's like a dog that starts killing chickens or savaging sheep. It doesn't matter how well behaved such a dog is normally, once he understands that it can be done, he has to be put down."

* * *

"We're go on Herrin and Schiff, and we also have a green light to kill the president if we can do so and still save the Lady," Vince Cardinale told his Belladonna team several hours later. They were gathered in Birdie's basement computer center in Arlington. Byrd had proven himself to be loyal and invaluable since the war began, and Cardinale had taken the chance of bringing him up to speed on the main operation itself, although he withheld the actual identity of the WPB's spy inside the White House from him. "It's simple, Vinnie," Birdie had told him. "Beatings, buggery, and waterboarding I can take, but when the electrodes go on my balls, that's when I start singing like a canary. Those are your parameters, so work within them."

Byrd had provided the team with two electronic devices, micro-global positioning indicators the size of a thumbnail that had to be planted somewhere on Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff's person so the WPB hit teams could locate and track down their targets. "Doc,

were you able to move her head-tuning appointment up?" asked Vinnie Skins.

"Yes, it seems I had an unavoidable scheduling conflict. She'll be there for her weekly therapy session at six p.m. tonight," said Shapira. "Or as soon thereafter as the Leader of the Free World gets through with his afternoon orgy. I don't like doing it, though. It's a break in pattern that the Secret Service might notice, especially after the fireworks tonight, but I know we have to give her these tracking devices and hope to God she can plant them."

"So she can be back in the White House by what? Twenty past seven?" asked Cardinale.

"Yes," said Shapira.

"The late briefing in the Situation Room for their War Cabinet always starts at nine, and it's usually over by ten-thirty or eleven, then the staff generally leave the buildings for sleep or for dissipations elsewhere," said Bob/Richie, reciting from memory some of the wealth of information and White House gossip he'd picked up from Georgia. "Neither of the targets overnight much at the White House, although they do have guest bedrooms assigned in the residence for that purpose. Angela Herrin generally goes right home to her pad on 12th Street Northeast in Brookland, where a couple of nights in the week she receives whatever lover she's getting it on with at the moment. She runs through them like a dose of salts. All white, all gentiles, everyone from low-level lawyers to baristas to garage mechanics, guys who have credible deniability and won't be missed if she decides to cut their throats during sex play or whatever she does. Apparently, she's quite the black widow. These guys either leave by two a.m., or in some cases they don't leave at all. According to West Wing gossip, she's supposed to be fucking her bodyguard as well, some Israeli thug named Mordecai Kravitsky, who helps her dump the bodies of her other toy boys up in some landfill in Prince George's County, where they never seem to get found until they're too decomposed for forensics, as if anybody would investigate anyway."

"White bodies turn up all over Maryland all the time," grunted Cardinale. "The cops are all niggers, so no one gives a damn."

"This guy Kravitsky is ex-Mossad, and he's usually her sole security," Bob went on. "Ronald Schiff, the White House chief of staff, either goes home, or he calls in to his wife in Georgetown claiming he's working late and then he goes clubbing along with a couple of his Secret Service detail who also like to boogie. We might be able to catch him and take him down in Muldoon's Pub or the Wiley Coyote. Sometimes he picks up a *shiksa* and he ends up in the Watergate complex in one of those special fuck-pads various power élite types maintain there."

"Yes, I know about them," said Shapira. "They're in a different part of the complex and the whole area is not only monitored but guarded by top-end, armed private security. It's a lot more locked down than the office area where I am. Our lords and masters want to make sure they're not interrupted in mid-debauch."

Bob went on: "The thing is, Georgia's supposed to be kicking back in the residence upstairs in the East Wing at night, while she waits for her second shift, so to speak. Not wandering around the West Wing schmoozing or chatting with people, especially not cabinet people and senior poobahs like the press secretary and chief of staff. Especially not during a war crisis when the place is on full security alert. Remember, for all her technical status as an employee and her full-access ID card, everybody knows who Georgia is and what she's there for, and she's considered to be maybe one cut above the help. Some of them probably think she's lower than the help, and our two hose-noses seem to be in that category. Georgia may be able to get next to the president on a regular basis, but so far as she can recall, neither Herrin nor Schiff have ever even acknowledged her existence or addressed a single word to her. She can't just walk into their offices for a conversation. She just plain might not be able to do this for us, even if she's willing. She might not be able to find a way to get close to the targets."

"We have to see if she's willing first," said Cardinale. "That means you three have a whole hour to persuade her to plant the tracking devices." He nodded at Shapira, Bob Campbell, and Betsy. He was sending in the whole crew who were known to Georgia to persuade and reassure her, because the mission was now being taken to a new and dangerous level. "Is she going to go for it?"

"I think she will," said Betsy confidently. "She's packing a lot of resentment, right back to the time when that bitch mother of hers kidnapped her. When people treat a woman like the inhabitants of this toilet have treated her, she'll do anything to hit back any way she can." Bob reflected grimly that in light of his newly acquired knowledge of her past, Betsy undoubtedly knew what she was talking about.

"Richie?" asked Cardinale.

"I'm not sure, sir," Bob said in a worried voice. "She's on edge, and this wasn't what she signed up for."

"Tell her I know that," said Cardinale. "Tell her whatever you have to, but you've *got to get her to do it*. Or at least try. Otherwise, we're going to have to intercept both of those Red Sea pedestrians and pull off two floats right in the Green Zone. We'll do that if we have to, in order to stop them from whispering sweet nuclear nothings in the president's ear, but it's going to get dicey under the best of circumstances. We're taking anti-tank weapons that can breach the armor in their limos, but if we have to take them on the fly, our own E&E will be problematic."

Bob knew that the CO was understating the case. Two spontaneous and bloody attacks against the White House press secretary and chief of staff right on the streets of Washington, D.C., in the middle of the ESMA and under the surveillance cameras, would set off the capitol city's entire emergency response protocol and bring down on them everything from the FBI and D.C. Metro Police SWAT teams, to the special Delta Force unit standing by at Fort Belvoir. The city would be locked down tight within three minutes, any escape from the spy cameras on every corner would become impossible, and the whole thing would become even more of a suicide mission than it already was. The Circus operatives had to have some way to track and locate both targets, so they could plan their strike and work out some kind of getaway that might give them a chance. Byrd had promised to do what he could to hack and take out the surveillance cameras in both immediate contact points when it went down, and to cover the gunners' escape and evasion. But in order to do that he had to know where it was to happen, he needed some idea of the getaway route, and he had to receive at least a little advance notice. "You said you're authorizing us to promise her

extraction after tonight, sir?" asked Bob keenly. "You don't want to use her to set up Hunter Wallace himself for assassination?"

"That's affirmative," said Cardinale. "The president—our president, not the tubby little pervert—has ordered specifically that we are not to place her in any more danger than is absolutely unavoidable. We made this woman a promise for her and her child, and we're going to keep it. I agree with that order, and not just on moral grounds. It would be too dangerous to hit Wallace, leaving her in place and hoping she could brazen it out when the heat comes on. It will be a near enough thing when we take out these two kikes tonight, and the whole security system freaks out in a St. Vitus's dance of paranoia. We'll find some other way to bake the Doughboy. If nothing else, Duke and I both are pretty good shots, and a .50-caliber bullet has a hell of a range. The son of a bitch can't hide over there in the Oval Office forever. He'll have to show his face sooner or later, and one day when he does, he'll have no more face left to show."

A bit later Bob and Betsy drove across the river into the Green Zone in his car and parked in the Watergate's underground lot. Betsy took Bob's hand as if he was a boyfriend or a trick, and led him giggling and jiggling to a certain elevator that was just out of range of the CCTV cameras. They both slipped into a utility closet using a forged passcard that opened the door without registering on the building's door access log in the Watergate's security control room, an invention of Birdie's that had revitalized the American burglary industry and on its own had already made him a millionaire through underworld sales. Although of course, being a millionaire didn't mean all that much any more, what with the inflation. The utility closet opened into a disused workshop, something that the security designers for the complex seemed to have forgotten. Five minutes later, having followed a circuitous route of great complexity that avoided every single camera, they sat in Dr. Jake Shapira's consulting room.

Shapira himself came in through the front entrance. At seven o'clock they were joined by Georgia Myers for her weekly session of bitching about how President of the United States or not, she wasn't paid enough for all the leather loving and ancient Roman role-playing involved in doing her duty to her country. At least, that's what Shapira reported back

to the Secret Service that she was saying. Georgia was wearing a yellow pastel blouse, brown leather skirt and sandals tonight, all of which got ash on them as she sat chain-smoking cigarette after cigarette. Her face was still beautiful, but she was pale and haggard, and her movements were brittle and jerky. Bob was right in his assessment: the pressure was starting to tell on her. *We have to get her out of there soon, or they're going to notice,* Bob thought urgently to himself. "Emergency meeting with all three of you guys tonight?" Georgia remarked, arching her eyebrows. "Something must be up, and I can guess what. The nuke thing?"

"We've got some good news and some bad news, Georgia," opened the Zombie Master. "We think your Mata Hari gig over there at Sixteen Hundred may well be almost done. We do need a couple more specific things from you, and yes, they do concern the disturbing possibility of a nuclear strike on the Republic. When this last assignment is done, in our assessment, it will be too dangerous for you to stay over there any longer, and we haven't forgotten our promise to you. Are you ready to clear out?"

"You mean it?" she asked, looking at Bob. He nodded. She exhaled smoke and seemed to slump in her chair. "Yes, I'm ready. God, am I ready to see Montana again!"

"We've got some trespassers there right now that we need to clear out first, but looks like that will just be a matter of time," said Bob. "We're winning on every front, or at least holding them."

"Yes, it's time, Georgia," said Shapira. "You'll be extracted, and you and your daughter will be taken to a safe house far away from D.C. You can ride out the war there, and once it's safe, you and Allura can finally Go Home. With the thanks of a grateful nation, might I add."

"Now, these last little things you want me to do?" probed Georgia, immediately spotting the hook in the bait.

Bob picked up the ball. "Georgia, our original intention was never to have you actually do anything overt," he said gently. "Just pass information on to us. But you know now what's at stake. If those two kikes Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff are left with unfettered access to the president, given the way the American military is losing the war, they will eventually persuade him to launch America's nuclear arsenal at the Northwest Republic. There now seems to be no doubt that we can

beat these swine in open battle, thanks to our ability to knock out their air power and their satellite surveillance and force them to take us on man-to-man on the ground, but the terrible destruction of even a few atomic warheads going off anywhere in the Republic would overwhelm all our emergency services and preparations and would be more than we could cope with. I honestly don't know what would happen, except that it would unleash our own version of the Apocalypse Option in retaliation, which means full-blown gas and bio attacks all over the United States. The amount of death and destruction that will follow if Hunter Wallace gives that order is beyond human calculation. The effects of the radiation alone will last for generations and will spread over half the world, not that anyone over there at Sixteen Hundred gives a damn. Large portions of the Republic could well become uninhabitable. No one questions your courage, Georgia, you've proven that time and again over the past couple of months . . ."

"You're going to kill the president, and you want me to help," said Georgia baldly.

"No," said Bob, shaking his head. "We wouldn't do anything like that with you still over there in the White House. That would be throwing you to the wolves, and we don't do that to our own. The Secret Service and the whole régime would go berserk and start lashing out in all directions, and you would be the first one dragged under the microscope. Even if they didn't suspect you outright, they'd probably give you the whole truth-serum-and-torture cocktail just on general principles. No, we want you to do just two things for us, Georgia, difficult tasks to be sure, but then you're out of there. You stroll out the side portico tomorrow morning just like usual, I pick you up, we go get Allura, and we're outta here."

"My mom and her servants won't just let me walk into the house on K Street and take Allura," said Georgia, quietly excited by the prospect.

"Betsy and I will be going with you, and we have no intention of asking their permission," said Bob.

"Do you want me to cut Halberstam's throat if he's there?" asked Betsy. Georgia looked at her, startled, realizing that she was dead serious.

"Come to that, I don't care what you do to Marvin, but Bobby, please don't hurt my mom," she said.

"Even after what she did to you, George?" asked Betsy. "I thought you hated her guts?"

"Not enough to want her dead," said Georgia. "Well, yeah, enough to want her dead, but what can I tell you? She's my mother. You only get one, you know?"

"Yes, I know," said Betsy, her face expressionless. Bob almost winced, but instead he went on.

"Okay, I won't hurt Amber, although we may have to restrain her in order to get your child. Now, down to the nitty-gritty. We're not going to kill the president, Georgia. We're going to kill a couple of Jews, Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff. You know why. They intend to murder millions of our own; they will glory in those deaths, and they will be praised through all of Zion if we allow that to happen. But we're not. They have raised their hand against the *true* chosen people of divine cosmic destiny, and for that, they will die. If there really is any moral order in the universe, their souls will be burning in hell this time tomorrow. We're going to do it tonight, before they can persuade Hunter Wallace to push that damned button and send nuclear warheads flying towards the Homeland and slaughter millions of white people like it was some kind of goddamned Purim festival. But we will need your help."

"You need my help to take two human lives?" asked Georgia.

"No, we need your help to take two Jewish lives," Bob told her. "You know these creatures, Georgia. Which is better, that two of them should die or that possibly millions of white people die if our Bluelights can't stop all those ICBMs aimed at Seattle and Portland and Boise and Missoula?"

"Marvin Halberstam is a lech who can't keep his hands off me, and he keeps my mom drunk and doped up so she won't find out what he's doing with grandma's money," said Georgia with a shrug, taking a drag on her cigarette. "Angela and Ronald are assholes. They look at me like I'm a whore. I am, but it isn't up to them to remind me of the fact. If they had ever even bothered to be polite to me, I might hesitate, but those two? Fuck 'em. I've known dozens of Jews in the past twelve

years, and not one of them was a nice person. They're nasty and creepy insects, and they need to be stomped on. I know I should be helping you out of love of country and love of race, and because of what these people are doing to Montana right now, but thanks to my mother, I was raised as a petty and self-centered American, and so I'll help you kill them for petty and self-centered American reasons. Congratulations, Mom. You got the red-white-and-blue daughter you always wanted. Yaaaaaay!"

"It's better to do the right thing for the wrong reasons than to do the wrong thing for any reason," said the Zombie Master philosophically.

"What exactly do you want me to do?" asked Georgia.

Bob quickly ran the situation down for her and showed her the two global positioning chips. "They are all silicon, plastic and graphite, with no metal parts or filaments or anything like that, so they won't trip a metal detector as you go in," he explained. "You see one has a little blue strip on it, and one red. That's so we can differentiate the signals. They're already activated. All you need to do is place them somewhere on Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff, and then use your phone to let us know which color you placed on which target, so our guys will know who they're following. The best way would be in something they wear or carry, in her purse, in his jacket pocket, in his hat if he wears one, something that we know will stay with them. Failing that, plant it in one of their briefcases if you can get near it, something like that. Then when they leave the White House, we will be able to follow them, run them down, and take them out."

Georgia shook her head. "Bobby, that's going to be real hard to do without it standing out like a sore thumb that I'm up to something, that I'm somewhere I've got no business being and fumbling around with people's stuff. I'll try. I really will. I get how important this is, but you have to understand, the White House is a very stratified place, and I'm on the very lowest level despite the fact that I see more of Hunter than his cabinet or his staff does. It's ironic that I could probably plant one of these on the president himself with no trouble, but not an upper staff member."

"Could you arrange to bump into Angela Herrin in the lady's room?" suggested the Zombie Master.

"Maybe, but the problem is all the goddamned cameras in every corridor," Georgia told them. "I'd have to more or less follow her around the halls waiting for her to step into the john, and the Secret Service monitoring the cameras from the basement would notice. I'm supposed to go right up to the residence when I get back tonight. I can maybe find some excuse to go back down to the West Wing, say I forgot my lipstick or something, but it would be pretty thin."

"The people watching her over there aren't just gunmen, you know," said the doctor. "Those agents are trained in psychology as well, how to establish patterns of behavior in the subjects they observe and spot breaks in those patterns, any action that looks out of the norm."

"I'll tell you what *might* be do-able," said Georgia. "I might be able to get it onto that big Jew legbreaker who sticks to Angela like glue, Motti. And maybe into the pocket of one of Schiff's Secret Service detail."

Bob sighed. "Georgia, do what you can. Remember, one way or the other, this is your last night over there. When you leave tomorrow, you leave for good. That means that as long as you don't do anything that will bring them down on you right that very second, you won't have to do any explaining later on. That's all the advice I can give you." He looked at Betsy and Shapira. "Can you give us a minute, comrades?" he asked.

"Sure," said Betsy. Both of them stood up and left the room.

"This has been hard as hell for you, Peanut," said Bob, taking Georgia's hand. "I know that. But what you've done has been the right thing. It's been important."

"What happens if I can't do it?" she asked. "Suppose I can't plant those tracking bugs?"

"Then you can't do it, and our guys have to more or less pull off a kamikaze charge somewhere on the street out there and hope they can get the job done. If they miss and either of those two hebes survives, they will know what it's about. One or both of them will be dragging you and Wallace out of bed in the wee hours of this morning terrified out of their wits from a near miss, and screaming every argument and every threat they can to make him call for that damned briefcase with the nuclear codes in it and give the order to push the big red button.

Just to save their own wretched lives, they will murder millions. That's the kind of people we're dealing with."

"Believe me, Bobby, after three months in that place I know what kind of people we're dealing with," said Georgia. "I grew up in this town, more or less, and I've always known that the people who rule the United States were corrupt and narcissistic and completely amoral. I mean, hey, how can you live anywhere in America and *not* know that, if you're paying any kind of attention? But I've never seen it close up like this before, Bobby. There's a kind of—Jesus, I don't know how to describe it—there's a kind of *poison* in the air over there at the White House. It's what it must be like when you're at the bottom of the sea in a sunken submarine or a diving bell, and the air starts to run out and go bad. It's like everybody in that place is quietly suffocating in an overpowering smell of *shit*, years of it, generations of it, stacked up layer after layer, decade after decade, generation after generation. I don't know if I believe in ghosts and hauntings or that kind of thing, but I've seen on these ghost hunter shows about how negative energy can build up in places like the White House, all the pain and greed and anger and hatred kind of sinking into the walls and getting absorbed by the floorboards and the carpets, until the very wood and stone become evil. That's the feeling I get over there. Sorry, I know you're probably wondering if I've lost it . . ."

"No, I don't think that," said Bob, still holding her hand. "I understand exactly what you're saying. I'm just sorry as hell I had to come back into your life like this and send you into that place, Peanut. But tomorrow it will be over, or at least your part in it will be done, if you can just be strong and smart and get this done for us tonight."

* * *

While the meeting in Shapira's office was going on, Major Vince Cardinale quietly infiltrated two armed teams of WPB assassins into the District of Columbia, bringing them in separately over all five bridges.

The dispositions were similar to what had been done on the night of the Close Encounter outside the South African embassy. The first

hit team consisted of Duke (Captain Frederick Fitzpatrick), Tricia (Lieutenant Alice Waters), and Little John (Lieutenant John Cramer). The second team included June Bug (Captain Alvin Rossbach), Frankie G. (Captain Frank Girardello), Rudy the Clown (Lieutenant Rudolph Heinlein) and Lieutenant Reg Williamson, who had at one time as part of his criminal cover been nicknamed Fur-face Reggie, but objected to the point where Cardinale thought best to drop it. Cardinale himself, Betsy (Elizabeth Parris) and Chicago Richie (Lieutenant Robert Campbell Jr., NCG) provided a third team for emergency backup and scouting.

It was still light out, and they all met in the guise of an after-work picnic party gathered around a green wooden table at the National Mall, in the shadow of the Washington Monument. Richie and Betsy arrived to find the picnic table spread with politically correct quiche, potato salad, and cheese tofu sandwiches on heavy-grained bread that tasted like cardboard. "You should have let me at least bring some fried chicken, boss," said Duke reproachfully. "Vegetarian picnics really suck."

"Fried chicken is also illegal, and we don't want some asshole cop strolling by who's bored and decides he has nothing better to do than enforce the law," said Cardinale. His phone beeped and he checked a quick text message in code on his screen. "Okay, that was Birdie. He says he's reprogrammed those two cameras to our right and left to alter their panning arcs just enough so we won't show on the monitor. Hopefully none of those niggers at DHS will notice the change, and if they do, they'll most likely just send a crew out to check the cameras first. Anyway, we shouldn't be here that long. Now listen up." They all bent around the picnic table and fumbled with bits and pieces of quiche and soft drinks to make it look to any observers as if they were eating. "Duke, Tricia, and Johnny are Red Team," said Cardinale. "You will intercept and take out the Herrin bitch. She should be leaving in a black Mercedes SuperSec limo, government special issue for big cheeses. Those rides have full armor plating and bulletproof glass, zero to a hundred and twenty in ten seconds flat, anti-caltrop radial tires and mine-proofed under-chassis, the works, so try not to chase it, because you'll be in for a long hard chase and that Israeli might be good enough

at his job to lose you. If Angie baby runs true to form, she will have only Kravitsky as her chauffeur and bodyguard, but do *not* assume that means an easy target. The Mossad were and are some of the most vicious trained killers in the world. We have to assume this big yid can shoot and hit what he aims at, and that he knows his kung fu, so don't cut him any slack, Duke. Take him out quick and at a distance if you get the chance."

"Roger that, sir," said Duke.

"We hope to get tracker bugs planted on both targets, but that may not be possible," Vinnie told them. "Birdie *thinks* he can hack into the White House security cameras themselves, but he's never tried before and he's not sure. In addition to which, they have all kinds of security software including some he may not be familiar with, and they might pick up on his hack. I've had Comrade Byrd change position for tonight. He'll be working from a hotel room in case they breach his firewalls and track down his hack. Hopefully, if that happens he'll have enough warning to make a break for it. I hope not, because we can't afford to lose him. Or any of you, for that matter. Anyway, if our asset can't place the tracking devices, but if Birdie can in fact get into the White House security system, he'll be able to spot Kravitsky picking up Herrin's limo in the underground parking garage beneath the Executive Office building just before the War Cabinet meeting breaks up, and so he can tell us when she's leaving. Ditto Ronald Schiff, White House chief of staff, who usually travels with two limos, one of which is a decoy, and a minimum of four Secret Service bodyguards. Birdie should be able to spot which limo he's in, which we'll need to know if we're going to hit the vehicle with a Panzerfaust.

"*If* we get the GPS bugs in place, we track the targets with Birdie's help." Cardinale continued. "If not, we just follow them around until we've both got clear shots at the car, or as clear as we can get in the middle of a city street at night. If you see the targets getting out of the vehicles and exposing themselves at a nightclub or anything like that, or if you get a good close shot with a rocket or a grenade, go ahead and take it immediately. Otherwise, on my command, we make simultaneous strikes with everything we've got. Let's see if we can confuse the enemy responders by giving them two major alarms at once. Once it's done,

you guys break contact with the scene and get to cover, an alleyway, underground garage, wherever you're out of eyesight. We will have to assume that the enemy has caught your cars on digital and they will issue BOLOs for them, so detonate your vehicles with all your weapons except for your handguns inside. The feds will think they're car bombs going off, and that will add to the confusion. Go to your E&E points on foot, as carefully but as quickly as possible. Pick up your secondary transport and try to make it out of the ESMA, back into Virginia if you can, into Maryland if you must. If they have the checkpoints sealed off, either run them in your cars or try and make it out of the ESMA on foot. Stay away from the Metro; those will be the first exits sealed off. Swim the damned Potomac if you have to. We need everybody off camera as soon as possible. Better to have you guys scrapping with nigger gang-bangers or nigger Maryland cops than being chased by FBI and real cops down here."

"Wounded?" asked Duke laconically.

"You all know Shangri-La?" They all nodded except Bob Campbell. "No, you don't, Richie. It's a safe house on J Street we use sometimes. Doc Shapira will be there with emergency medical aid. I originally tried to veto that, but he insisted. For some reason he thinks enough of you apes not to want to let you die, even if his cover gets compromised. Hopefully it won't be necessary. Any more questions?"

June Bug raised his hand. "Sir, what if at this War Cabinet session tonight, the two kikes are able to convince Wallace to order a nuclear strike on the Republic?"

"Then we're too late, and we will be citizens of a country that has ceased to exist," said Cardinale bleakly. "We then spend whatever lives remain to us here in this city, killing everyone who was even remotely involved in destroying the last hope of the world. Killing them in as painful manner as possible. I don't know what else to tell you, June. We have to stop these two Jews, *now*, tonight! These evil things have been whispering in the ear of powerful men of our race for centuries, and the consequences have been terrible beyond comprehension. They *cannot* be allowed to do this! If there was any way we could storm the White House by force, get at the Jews and kill them, then I'd order it, even if it meant none of us got out alive."

"Where will you and Betsy be, Boss?" asked Duke.

"Betsy and I will be on the move in my Cadillac to provide emergency backup and support to either team that needs it. We'll act as a second surveillance car, a second attack car, or we'll extract any of you who end up on foot."

"Where do you want me?" asked Bob/Richie.

"I have a special assignment for you. The rest of you, start moving back to your vehicles now. All of us have been clustered here for too long. Get out of the Mall, get mobile and start cruising, circling, a good long radius around Sixteen Hundred, stay loose and ready to move in case either target decides to cut out of the situation briefing early." When the rest of the team were gone except for himself and Betsy, Cardinale said, "Rich, how's your art appreciation?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" asked Campbell.

"You need to take a cruise over to Pennsylvania Avenue, drive past Sixteen Hundred, and stop at Sixteen Sixty-One," Cardinale told him. "It will be a two-story red brick building, the Renwick Gallery. It's an annex of the Smithsonian Institution, housing part of its collection of early American art. Put this on your windshield." Cardinale reached into his jacket pocket and brought out a blue and white plastic decal.

"Holy Moses, that's a Federal Zone parking sticker!" exclaimed Bob. "Is this the real thing?"

"It will pass the Metro and FBI databases if anyone checks it, let's put it that way," said Cardinale dryly. "And yes, it cost even more than that Class A FLEC card we got for you. There is a small parking lot behind the Renwick that you will access off 17th Street. The first access code I wrote on the back there will get you in and out of the automatic gate. Once you park, you use that second code on the rear door. The cameras will be conveniently malfunctioning in both the lot and the building, but use caution anyway; there's only one person in there who needs to see you. Go down the corridor to the office on your far left and you will meet a little guy who looks like he's about a hundred years old. He's Doctor Herrick, the curator of the gallery and probably the Northwest Republic's longest serving agent in the United States. He was personally converted by the Old Man himself, way back in the day when dinosaurs roamed the earth. He will show you to an observation

post where you can keep an eye on Sixteen Hundred, see if there's any unusual movement or anything of the kind, and be ready to pick up Belladonna on the fly if she hollers rainstorm."

Rainstorm was Georgia's coded emergency distress call; it meant she was in trouble and needed an immediate extraction. The problem was that she would first have to make it out of the White House on her own and then get to one of the extraction points, either Mickey Mouse, which was across Lafayette Square at 16th and H Streets and would be indicated by a texted picture of the famous cartoon rodent, or else Donald Duck, which was on the corner of 15th and F, in front of the Treasury Department. If she totally lost contact due to her special phone being confiscated, lost or destroyed, she had to make it to a public computer terminal to use e-mail or get hold of an unsecured phone, preferably a Mighty Mart disposable, but all of these paled beside the obstacle of getting out of the White House once she'd been discovered and exposed as a spy.

Ever since the Clinton years, the White House had been equipped with several private cells and a soundproof interrogation room in the sub-basement near the security control room, where the Secret Service and sometimes the president himself or herself could conduct private and discreet questioning and attitude adjustment sessions with anyone they so desired and could lure into the White House. Hillary Clinton had damned near lived down there, and despite her public feminism, like all female rulers she was reputed to be especially cruel to women who crossed her. Practically speaking, if she was caught inside Sixteen Hundred Pennsylvania, Georgia wasn't coming out again.

* * *

Casualty summary as of July 3rd

NDF military casualties—4,220 dead and 9,436 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—2,804 dead and 4,312 wounded
United States military casualties—72,642 dead and 100,657 wounded
United States civilian casualties—138,464 dead
and 368,826 wounded, gassed, or ill from biowar
agents, casualties overwhelmingly non-white

Aztlan military casualties—Est. approx. 192,000 dead, 164,000 wounded including those killed in Aztlan civil conflict beginning around June 30.
Aztlan civilian casualties—Unknown number wounded, gassed, or ill from biowar agents or killed in civil unrest during the collapse of Aztlan.

XVIII

Cry Havoc

(D-Day plus 14 days)

And Caesar's spirit, raging for revenge,
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice
Cry "Havoc!" and let slip the dogs of war . . .
—Julius Caesar, Act 3, Scene One

The War Cabinet meeting in the White House Situation Room on the evening of July third was tense and vituperative. It had finally begun to sink into the ruling élite's consciousness that barring some sudden stroke of *deus ex machina* the United States was going to lose the war, or at least be forced into a position that would be extremely difficult for even the liberal state-controlled media to spin as victory.

After a lengthy briefing on the military situation from Admiral Brava and General Scheisskopf, during which President Hunter Wallace mostly kept silent, Vice President of the United States Hugh Jenner spoke up. For the past several days, Wallace had been increasingly morose, withdrawn, and twitchy. A lifetime in politics warned Jenner that something bad was coming down the pike. Wallace knew that now the quick victory he had hoped for was no longer going to happen, his whole career was in ruins. He would be looking for someone to blame, and he would be willing to do anything in order to salvage something from the ruins. Heads of state in such positions are dangerous to the nations they rule. "Mr. President, I don't think it would be inopportune now to discuss some of the political implications of all—of our present situation," began Jenner carefully. "I need hardly remind you that tomorrow at two p.m. local time you are addressing the nation and the

world in your annual Fourth of July speech. May I ask what you are going to tell the American people?"

"At least we have cable television back on line so he *can* address the nation and the world," muttered Secretary of State David Modlin.

"Indeed, Mr. Secretary," said Jenner. "That's something of a minor miracle. But what are you going to say tomorrow, Mr. President? I haven't seen any of your speechwriters around the West Wing any time today."

"I was busy," said Wallace sullenly. *Yeah, busy with that blonde Halberstam bimbo,* thought Jenner to himself. Wallace ignored his question and addressed the two Pentagon officers. "Admiral Brava, General Scheisskopf, I want you both to give me candid worst-case scenario assessments. How bad is this likely to get?"

Albert Scheisskopf cleared his throat. "General Logan's situation at Anaconda seems at the moment to be the most desperate, sir. His men are out of food and water, and Logan himself is separated from his main force by almost four miles of exposed ground under such heavy enemy shellfire that he can't re-unite his command. They are outnumbered and outgunned. The situations at Fairfield and Ponderay aren't much better. The offensive from Aztlan has totally collapsed and right now, we're having trouble getting accurate information out of there. There is a lot of casual rioting and shooting in the streets of Los Angeles and Sacramento, and apparently some generals are muttering about a military coup against El Presidente."

The U.S. Army and Marines had thrown together a force of almost 100,000 men that was now moving across American Montana toward Anaconda on the NAR side, in an attempt to break the siege, reinforce and re-supply the beleaguered Group South. The Pentagon had stripped every last remaining combat arms soldier and most of the supply and personnel clerks, motor pool mechanics, MPs, cooks and bottle washers from over fifty bases for the purpose. Even so, half of the relief force was comprised of National Guardsmen in non-combat military occupational specialties, a number of companies that had been thrown into action during their last weeks of basic training, men and women who had been previously deemed medically unfit or too obese for combat, and recent retirees who had been called back to active service. This was

no Baghdad Boogie, it was a last-ditch effort to avert the total disaster of having an American army clearly and undeniably decimated and defeated in the field, by a people and a nation whom the American media and ruling élite hated and held in contempt. The column was advancing slowly, and the field grade officers were reporting a high desertion and suicide rate among the ranks.

The Pentagon had also stripped every American continental base of the last of its motorized transport, and had begun commandeering civilian vehicles when that proved insufficient. When that was gone, there was no more. The United States Treasury had no money left to buy any more vehicles, weapons, or munitions, and no one in the U.S.A. or anywhere else in the world would extend them any credit. There had simply been too many bond and T-bill defaults, too many bailouts down through the years that had disappeared without a trace, too much willy-nilly printing of money to cover welfare payoffs and just plain bribes to minorities, unions, and special interests, as well as to pay the daily operating expenses of government that were nowhere near covered by depleted tax revenue as effective production of anything within the United States ceased. The New Deal had lasted for a century, but finally it had collapsed, when the United States at long last ran out of other people's money. There had been too many defaults on things like Social Security and Medicare in the past for anyone to trust America with a dime anymore.

Scheisskopf's face was haggard. This simply *didn't happen* to the mighty by God United States of America military, unquestioned lords of every battlefield they surveyed since 1945. At least they were in their own minds, even if history didn't quite bear that out in embarrassing little glitches like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. "What do we hear from the Anaconda relief column?" asked President Wallace.

"The relief column is advancing with all speed, Mr. President, and every man and woman in that force will do their duty, I can promise you," replied Scheisskopf.

"Except for the deserters," replied Wallace dryly.

"They're nearing Billings, but there seems to be a problem," said Admiral Brava. "We still have aerial scouting by AWACs and choppers on that side of I-Fifteen, remember, out of range of the Nazi ray

guns. Apparently, there is a large enemy force advancing on the relief column from the south, out of Wyoming. The NAR call it their Seventh Army, and we've learned it's commanded by that kraut, Conrad Baumgarten."

"The one who used to be the sniper back during the Trouble? The one they called *Der Judenjäger*?" asked Angela Herrin with distaste.

"The Jew Hunter, yes, ma'am," replied Brava. "This is the flank attack that we were told would never happen by . . ." He didn't dare to name Wallace and Janet Chalupiak to their faces. "Well, we were assured it would never happen by those who were in charge of planning and logistics, and we were compelled to proceed on the basis that there would be no threat from that quarter. We were assured that Wyoming is nothing but a big wasteland, the enemy is spread thin on the ground and never managed to fully assimilate the proud American cowboy spirit, and besides, cowboys are all closet homosexuals and did I never see the classic flick *Brokeback Mountain*? The evil racists walk softly in Wyoming, because the white people of that state secretly love all the world's black and brown people, especially the noble Native Americans, despite the fact that for some reason there don't seem to *be* any more Native Americans in Wyoming. The racists don't dare maintain too great a troop presence there for fear of a pro-American revolt by fifty thousand secretly liberal and gaily inclined John Waynes and Clint Eastwoods on horseback, waving Old Glory and flourishing Winchesters like Rooster Cogburn. We seem to be getting our strategic thinking from old Hollywood movies, by no means for the first time. Wyoming is so ripe for our plucking that we don't have to worry about it, we will be welcomed in the streets of Laramie as liberators . . ." Brava couldn't help it; his voice was rising almost to a scream of rage.

"It was Bagwell," offered the Secretary of State, "Gator Dave" Modlin. "I thought we'd all agreed to blame it all on Bagwell, since he's gone crazy and he's not able to respond in the media from his rubber room." Modlin was not being crass or cruel; he was simply stating rather bluntly a policy that had taken shape in the collective governmental mind since Secretary of Defense Marlon Bagwell had fled clucking and flapping his wings from the room. The narrative was already being fed out into the news cycle by administration talking heads and tame

media people on the cable networks. Operation Strikeout was Marlon Bagwell's baby, it had gone south, and Bagwell had broken under the pressure and lost his mind in remorse. The president, the Pentagon, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the rest of the cabinet and government were just along for the ride, and certainly not to blame for an American military and civilian death toll that might well top one million.

"We still haven't figured out how the president is going to explain all this away in his nationwide address tomorrow. Admiral Brava, let's cut to the chase. Without the nuclear option, what are our prospects?" asked Ronald Schiff bluntly. "Is the United States going to win this war?"

"Without air power and satellite surveillance support, no," Brava replied with equal bluntness. "Even if we were to suddenly recover our satellite capability this very minute, the Air Force is now extremely short on available aircraft, ordnance, and pilots. We are losing because we had no idea on earth that either of these two Nazi secret weapons existed, and they caught us completely by surprise."

"An intelligence failure of the first magnitude," said Janet Chalupiak.

"A catastrophic intelligence failure, yes ma'am," said Brava. "We don't have to blame that one on Bagwell, since we have another scapegoat in the rubber room who will do, and who really *does* deserve the blame. I need hardly remind anyone here that until recently the Central Intelligence Agency was headed by a woman who is now confined in a padded cell in St. Elizabeth's hospital, next to our quondam Secretary of Defense, and who frittered away several years using the immense resources of her agency chasing space aliens, when they should have been learning all about these Bluelight things and about this lethal computer virus that has crippled our eyes in the sky. Mr. President, I won't bother to suggest to the administration a serious rethink on the whole concept of affirmative action at the highest levels of government . . ."

"Because to do so would be a criminal act in violation of a dozen federal hatecrime statutes!" snapped Chalupiak. "How *dare* you? You know damned well that the only reason *I'm* in this room myself is because I'm a lesbian!"

Brava looked at her strangely. Scheisskopf leaned over and whispered quickly in his ear, "For God's sake, Hector, *don't say it!* Don't throw away a forty-year career!"

Brava recovered himself. "Yes, Madam Secretary, you are entirely correct. For me to suggest any such thing would indeed be criminal, which is why I will not suggest it. I am simply pointing out that for no discernible reason having *anything* at all to do with government policy or the values of, uh, tolerance and diversity and democracy, through some blind act of the unfeeling gods that has simply fallen on us completely unexpectedly, out of nowhere, something none of us could *possibly* have predicted . . ." Brava paused and took a breath. "We seem to have had our ass handed to us by the Northwest American Republic, and before Secretary Chalupiak objects, I think those white men we so hate and despise are in the process of earning the right to be called any damned thing they want, since we don't seem to be able to prevent them. We have lost almost our entire air force, a good deal of our navy, and we are now about to lose not one, not two, but three, count 'em, *three* entire armies, and a fourth if the Montana relief column can't fight off this attack from the south by the NDF Seventh Army. Ladies and gentlemen, the long and the short of it is that fourteen days in, the United States of America is now royally fucked." He sat down.

"So what do you recommend we do?" asked Hunter Wallace, staring down at the table. He had been silent during most of the meeting. "Admiral Brava? General Scheisskopf?"

"You know what you have to do!" shouted Angela Herrin angrily. "Send for the briefcase with the codes, and initiate the Apocalypse Option! Nuke these Jew-hating motherfuckers back to the Cretaceous period! Let the few who are left crawl in and out of caves wearing animal skins while their precious little yellow-haired children are born with two heads! Six million Jews died in ovens; now let all of them die in one big oven! *Do it*, Hunter!"

"Do it if for no other reason than to save the lives of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers!" urged Ronald Schiff. "For God's sake, Mr. President, that was why Harry Truman gave the order for the drops on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to prevent massive American

military casualties in a land invasion of Japan! Are you less of a man than Truman?"

"I asked Admiral Brava and General Scheisskopf what *they* suggested we do." said Wallace.

"Mr. President, without our air power and our spy satellites we are helpless on the ground," said Brava quietly. "We have almost half a million men completely stalled in the Northwest, running out of food and water and ammunition, surrounded by an enemy that outnumbers them almost ten to one. It also has to be said quite frankly that their personnel are better than ours, better trained and more highly motivated. The Northmen are fighting for their country, for their homes and families. The American military is simply fighting to stay alive for one more day. The U.S. forces are being pounded into dust by a massive amount of field artillery that our pre-war intelligence seems to have grossly underestimated both as to its quantity and its quality—I mean, Jesus! Who the hell uses vehicle-drawn *cannons* that you just aim like a squirrel gun any more, instead of electronically guided missile systems at ten million bucks a pop?" he added, shaking his head in wonder.

"So what do we do about it, Brava?" asked Wallace sullenly. "Is there any hope at all of getting our satellite surveillance capacity back on line?"

"Not at this time, sir," said Brava. "Whatever this bug is, it's simply killed the orbitals. Nobody at Canaveral or in Houston or Honolulu can raise a peep out of a single satellite, and neither can any of the private communications conglomerates get a signal off any of their own orbitals. To our instrumentation, it's all just space junk now. Unless we can persuade the Russians to give us access to their orbital surveillance vehicles then we're blind for the duration."

"Premier Malinovsky won't even take my calls," said Wallace in despair. "I even tried the old Cold War Hotline that one of our people found and hooked up again, the one that was supposed to ring in the Kremlin. I got a recorded message that the translator tells me is an advertisement for some Russki porno web site."

"Cossacks! Russian bastards!" said Angela fiercely. "They're all Jew-haters too!"

"You now know as much about the current the situation as we do, sir," said Admiral Brava. "I just spent an hour describing it. Unleashing a nuclear holocaust that will probably poison and render uninhabitable most of North America west of the Mississippi is in my opinion neither a realistic nor a sane option. Those nukes were designed to go off in Russia and China, not in Spokane. One might as well try to win a boxing match by dousing both fighters with gasoline and striking a match. The question is, do we let all those men die or do we put a stop to it and save who and what we can?"

"Mr. President," spoke up Scheisskopf gravely, "I would rather be flayed alive than utter a single word of what I must say now, but it is my duty to speak. In April of 1865, there came a day when General Robert E. Lee said to his aides, 'I must go and see General Grant,' They met at Appomattox Court House. You don't have to go to Appomattox, Mr. President. You can use a video screen or you can have someone else do it for you. I will do it, although it would be better coming from someone in the political echelon. Maybe they'd respond better to Vice President Jenner, since he comes from Oregon. But the time has come when you have to call President Morehouse and bring this to an end. We are beaten, sir. Accept that fact, and save what we can, while we can, because once they counterattack they're going to move into Utah, northern California, maybe Canada, and they will be unstoppable. They may even march on Washington, D.C., and right now to be honest there's not much we could do to prevent them."

"And leave the two hundred nuclear missiles that could win this for us in thirty minutes sitting and rusting away in their silos?" snapped Angela Herrin angrily. "What the hell is wrong with you?"

"One more word like that from you, General Scheisskopf, and I will have my good friend the U.S. Attorney General convene a very special grand jury to investigate you for cowardice and treason!" shouted Janet Chalupiak in a hysterical rage, her face mottling splotchy blue.

"My God, it's happening again!" moaned Ronald Schiff into his hands, beginning to weep theatrically. "Once more the Jewish people are betrayed into the hands of Esau!"

Now it was Scheisskopf's turn to snap. He turned angrily on the paunchy little White House chief of staff and said. "It may come as a

surprise to you, Mr. Schiff, but the fact is that there are millions of people who live on this continent who are *not* Jewish, and who don't deserve to die or lose everything they have because you have a beef with some racist lunatics out in the north woods somewhere! God *damn* it, it's not always about you people!"

"Yes, it is, Albert," said Vice President Hugh Jenner bitterly. "Let's not kid ourselves. It *is* always about them. It's been all about them for the past hundred years. You going to get your dyke friend the Attorney General to investigate *me* for treason and hatecrime now, Janet? Will a time ever come in America when we can simply stand up and *tell the truth?*"

"Good God, why would we ever want to do that?" asked Secretary of State Modlin, genuinely shocked. "They'd tear us to pieces in the streets!"

"I suppose you'd rather be beaten by the Nazi pigs and be laughed at and cursed by history, than use the nuclear arsenal first given to this country by Jewish scientists like Robert Oppenheimer and Edward Teller to rid the world of this curse of racism once and for all?" shouted Angela Herrin.

Jenner turned to her coldly. "Ms. Herrin, I am from Portland, Oregon. Grew up there, served in Congress from there, and I once had a home there, a home that these Nazi sons of bitches destroyed when they conquered the city twelve years ago and took everything I had. Since then I have dedicated my life to going back there some day and once again seeing the American flag flying over the place of my birth. There is no man or woman in this room or in this government who despises these people and wants to see them all dead any more than me. But I have no desire to raise the American flag over a heap of molten glass, not to mention give an order that's going to kill millions of people in my city. People some of whom I know, because for whatever reason they chose to stay behind. And what about Canada? How will Prime Minister Simoneau react when we start slinging around nuclear warheads that scatter radiation clouds and fallout all over the western part of his country and make Vancouver and Calgary glow in the dark? How about Aztlan? Don't you think San Francisco and Sacramento have suffered enough from the Nazi phosgene and anthrax? How about the

people in other parts of the United States? How will we make the wind recognize the Northwest borders and not blow fallout all over Denver and Salt Lake City and Omaha?"

"Who gives a fuck about flyover country?" demanded Schiff irritably.

Angela Herrin went icy calm and turned back to Hunter Wallace. "All right, then, Mr. President, let us assume that the United States has now joined every other nation on the face of this earth and has finally betrayed the Jewish people to the bloodlust of those who hate us. That's moral putrefaction, but such is the way with all *goyim* sooner or later. We have long known that all of you secretly hate us, but we won't go there. Let's get practical here.

"What will happen when the Nazis counterattack, as they most certainly will when they have finished destroying our armies with all this nuclear-free leisure we are giving them to do so? How much of America will they decide to help themselves to? The rest of Montana? Utah? Northern California? Will they conquer all of California and shove almost fifty million Hispanic people into ovens for the crime of speaking another language and having brown skins? Suppose they do decide to march on Washington? Or fly on Washington? Remember, they still have aircraft even if we don't. Suppose they don't wait until they have defeated the armies at Anaconda and Fairfield and Ponderay?" she asked. "They may have the capability to attack right now. We know they were able to keep these plasma weapons and this computer virus that knocked out our satellites secret. Suppose they have other secret weapons that they've been able to conceal? Who knows, maybe Kanesha Knight was right. Maybe somehow these racist devils really *have* been able to access extraterrestrial technology. Think, Hunter! They may have secret attack craft hiding in caves in Wyoming and Idaho that could be hovering over the White House within an hour! Do you remember the scene from *Independence Day* when the aliens blew up the White House?"

"Back to basing strategic moves on Hollywood movies again, are we?" said Brava with a defeated sigh. *"Mother of God!"*

"Let me get this straight, Angela," said Jenner. "You're trying to frighten the President of the United States into launching a massive

nuclear strike that will destroy millions of lives and render maybe a quarter of the land mass between here and the Arctic Circle uninhabitable for thirty years, for fear that Nazis will come in a flying saucer and blow him up with ray guns here in the White House?"

"It could happen!" insisted Schiff stoutly. "They shot down our planes with ray guns, didn't they?"

"The President is not that fucking stupid!" shouted Jenner. He looked at the unusually silent Hunter Wallace, who was staring distractedly at the table in front of him. "Jesus, you're *not,* are you?" asked Jenner in alarm.

And thus it went, around and around and around.

* * *

On her way back from the Watergate in a cab, when it was still light out in the daylight savings time of a summer's night, Georgia figured out an extremely lame excuse to go back to the West Wing and sit in her little clerk's cubbyhole where she supposedly did her day work compiling and data-entering economic statistics. She even had her own White House work database where she could keep and review all the crap she entered, although it was a dummy and wasn't connected to anything else on the White House intranet. The actual statistical data in that area was maintained by the Treasury and the Department of Labor across town.

Georgia would be observed sitting in the cubicle by the security cameras, of course, but she could put on headphones so she would not be physically overheard while she watched *Palm Beach For Real.* This was an especially moronic reality TV show about four black and brown young men and four young white women having nightly orgies both hetero and homo in a millionaire's mansion in Palm Beach, Florida, in graphic detail with full close-ups, of course. At the beginning of the season, one of the young women had been Latina, but she was removed after a formal protest from the Aztlan government as presenting an "offensive racial stereotype." An Americanized Korean girl replaced the mami, but the powerful Korean business community had threatened to launch a boycott of the show's advertisers because Myong "presented

a bad example to young Asian womanhood," and so she in turn was replaced by a white chick. No one cared what kind of stereotype or bad example white sluts presented.

Georgia couldn't think of any logical excuse for the Secret Service or anyone else as to why she was watching the stupid show on her computer in the West Wing and not on the 60-inch plasma screen upstairs in the East Wing residence; she simply hoped nobody noticed her and asked. Watching a multiracial orgy was all she could come up with to explain her presence where she should not be at this time of day. She knew that her two targets for the tracking bugs were down in the Situation Room now, and she had to get to them, but she didn't know how. She could see no way she could get anywhere near there, bluff her way in, or explain her presence to the president and the assembled brass if she did.

She closed her eyes and thought of the house on Daly Avenue in Missoula, in the snow, in the summer heat with the window air conditioners humming. She was sure she could still remember every room in the place. Bob had told her that her father still lived there, had kept her room the way it was on the day she had disappeared. The possibility that she could see once more the home of her childhood, could live there again, that she could stand in her old room and see her old toys and books, that she could raise her daughter there and see Allura play on the swings and the jungle gym in the little Bonner Park near the house, take her up on Mount Sentinel, or down along Clark Fork to splash in the water—this was something she had never believed might happen. That world had been gone forever, but now it was within reach again. She had to do this one last thing and then she could finally wake up from this long nightmare, it could all *be* again. Georgia knew she had to fight down her terror and find some way to do the impossible, so that she could see it all again, and know that it had been real.

Weird, she thought to herself. *Here I am right at the center of power, the center of the world, where millions of women like me would give anything to be, and all I want to do is get out of here and go back to a little place no one knows or cares about.*

She sat in the darkened office watching the perversions on the computer monitor, and she thought desperately. Any attempt to

penetrate the Situation Room while the conference was in progress was out. If she hung around down here in the West Wing long enough she could probably catch Angela Herrin, Ronald Schiff, or both leaving the building, but what then? Walk up and give Ronald Schiff a hug, and slip the GPS chip in his jacket pocket? How surprising and completely out of character would that be? Surely, the man wasn't so stupid as not to suspect something funny was going on right away? Plus he would probably be surrounded with witnesses. As to Angela Herrin, Georgia had no clue. The only thing she could think of was Angela's purse. Some women had a careless habit of leaving their purses or handbags lying around any old where. As far as Georgia could recall, Angela Herrin wasn't one of them.

Problem is, I'm on a time limit here, Georgia thought to herself. She had to get the trackers planted now, tonight. If she'd had a few days to plan, it would be a lot more feasible, but somehow she had to get both Jews tagged before they left the building in perhaps an hour's time. *It's just not possible,* she thought to herself in despair. At least not without making herself as conspicuous as a cow in church and alerting everybody that something odd was going on, including the Secret Service agents she knew were watching everything in the White House from the basement control room. *Hmm, Secret Service agents . . .* Georgia thought. *Okay, if I can't get to Angie and Ron directly, maybe the bodyguards . . .*

She knew the hulking, big-nosed and blue-chinned Israeli Motti Kravitsky by sight. She knew that Ronald Schiff's four-man detail was usually headed by Agent Elmore Pettis, an Oklahoma cracker of the Christian Zionist persuasion who had specifically asked for the assignment because he considered it an honor to be allowed to protect the safety of one of the Apples of God's Eye. Thinking back carefully, she recalled that at one time or another over the past few months both men had given her the eye in the White House corridors. Just the odd casual glance and bit of body language, Elmore's hinting at the Christian man's wonted deep fascination with Scarlet Women and Motti's brief but naked animal lust of the Jew for anything blonde and gentile.

This wasn't unusual, in the White House or elsewhere. Georgia knew perfectly well from the age of fifteen that she was a stunner. She was accustomed to virtually all men reacting to her in a certain way

that without a single politically incorrect or even impolite word made it quite clear what they were envisioning about her in their minds—except for Bob Campbell, who appeared to be well and truly Married with a capital M, which she admired and envied in him. She had discovered at a young age that she could use her beauty to get what she wanted from men, anything from drugs to a passing grade in algebra. Tonight she just had to use it to get close enough to two men to plant something on them while they were sufficiently distracted not to notice.

During her stay at the White House Georgia had picked up on the fact that as in all hierarchies, there were rules, there were pigeonholes, and she had her own pigeonhole. She had been there three months and she was now a known quantity. She might as well have worn a sign on her back marked "Private Stock," but that meant her role was known to both the Jewish and the Christian gun thug. They knew who she was, they were used to seeing her around, and they would not suspect her after a single apparently accidental encounter, unlike SAIC Lee Lyons and the huge negro gunman Hadding, who seemed to suspect everyone. It was the only plan she could think of, and it would have to do.

But where to find them? They would be somewhere nearby in the West Wing, since they would be expected to escort their primaries home after the meeting. There was a kind of bullpen in the security control room in the basement, with a break room, where Secret Servicemen on lunch breaks who didn't feel like working out in the White House gym hung out. It included a small in-house bar with a prized indoor smoking permit, although only liquor and marijuana cigarettes were allowed and only then when an agent was officially off the clock. No tobacco. At least that much lip service was paid to the law in the seat of government. The president and his senior staff were, of course, allowed to have a nice relaxing and flavorful Cohiba in the Oval Office, or anywhere else, but the lower ranks had to make do with the White House's unofficial smoking area in the Rose Garden.

That's it! thought Georgia. *The Rose Garden!* She had seen both Agent Pettis and Mordecai Kravitsky in the Rose Garden puffing away, although Kravitsky flaunted his Judaic privilege by smoking pretty much anywhere in the White House he chose. Georgia knew this because the man smoked god-awful Russian latakia cigarettes

called *papirosy,* and you could always tell when he'd just passed by in the corridor because it smelled as if the carpet was on fire. Maybe she could find both of the gunmen smoking in the Rose Garden. With any luck, she could misdirect them long enough to plant the GPS trackers on them. If she saw Kravitsky she even knew what approach she'd use with him. She would ask him to recommend a good Israeli restaurant to which she could take her stepfather and stepsister Talia for Marvin's birthday. Her mother too, if Amber weren't too drunk or doped.

Georgia got up from her desk and turned off the computer, put down her headphones, and drew her own cigarette pack from her purse. With careful thought, she considered putting one of the small chips inside the paper wrapping and trying the "keep the pack" trick when one of her targeted individuals asked her for a cigarette, which would have worked fine on TV, but how was she to get one of them to ask her for a cigarette, especially since the Israeli smoked those hideous Russian things? Plus she had no idea what brand Pettis smoked. No, she would have to place the trackers into both men's pockets, or some other secure location.

Georgia now had at least a semi-legitimate if illegal reason for being in the West Wing; if challenged she could claim she just wanted an evening stroll in the lovely Rose Garden, and count on the Secret Serviceman or staff member to take in the smoldering cigarette butt in her hand. If she'd light up a joint it would be legal and would make more sense; the Rose Garden was a beautiful place to get high even on a muggy Washington summer night. But Georgia feared that even one toke would set her back down on the spiral she had leaped off at Bobby Campbell's request three months before, and so she elected to inhale a carcinogen that would destroy her lungs instead of a narcotic that would fry her brain. She strolled down the corridor past the Secret Serviceman at the desk, knocked perfunctorily on the door of the Oval Office, and when she got no answer she ran her pass card through the lock. Georgia had recently obtained Oval Office access on her card, although she did not know that President Wallace had granted it as a slap at Lee Lyons and his suspicions of her. She opened the door and walked right through, then out the French doors into the dark steam

bath of the Rose Garden, pausing to flick her Bic and light her cigarette with a flourish right in front of the security camera.

Even at this time of night, she was not the only smoker in the garden. There were half a dozen other White House employees, from cleaning staff to policy wonks, strolling up and down the graveled walks or sitting on the stone benches by the discreet ash cans, in the easy confraternity of the American smoke hole. Georgia quietly did a circuit of the garden, nodding to people of her acquaintance. At first she thought she was out of luck, and she began feverishly to turn over in her mind any other possible place she might run into either Agent Pettis or Mordecai Krivitsky. But then she saw Pettis sitting on one of the stone benches, a forbidden Tiparillo in his teeth. She sat down beside him. "Hi," she said. "Agent Pettis, isn't it?"

"Yes ma'am, and you're Ms. Halberstam," said Pettis almost bashfully, ashamed of the sinful and impure thoughts he had entertained in his mind regarding this young woman, doubtless temptations sent by the devil. He was a trim and well-built man with a short reddish crew cut, wearing the usual impeccable Secret Service suit and tie that marked his calling as much as any bemedalled general's uniform.

"You like cigars?" she asked, nodding at the Tiparillo.

"When I can get them," he said. "I can't get them often, though."

"Lee Lyons a hard-nose about the Demon Weed?" said Georgia with a merry laugh. "Well, you *are* an officer of the law and all that, you know."

"Lee knows I smoke. Half the agents on the detail do. The smoking itself he looks the other way about. He says we need to keep alert at all times and jonesing for a cigarette interferes with our job performance. But he doesn't approve of any of his people dealing with buttleggers to buy tobacco, since after all they're criminals, and so we kind of have to scrounge. Most of us have a deal going with somebody at the TEA to slip us confiscated contraband out of the evidence lockup for cash under the table, but good cigars are hard to come by, at least at the prices they charge."

"You mean you don't get a law enforcement discount?" asked Georgia with a giggle, slipping the blue-striped GPS chip into her palm in case she got a chance to plant it.

"Not from those hustlers at TEA, we don't," said Pettis, shaking his head mournfully.

"Uh, look, Agent Pettis, I'm not a cop, and I got a solid connection for the plant life, so I can get you whatever you want. Cohibas, Macanudos, Havanas, you name it, and I'll let you have them for what I pay for them," offered Georgia. "How's that for a law enforcement discount?"

"Well, I might just take you up on that, ma'am," said Pettis interested.

"Uh, you're on the Chief of Staff's detail, right?" asked Georgia.

"Yes. Why?" he replied.

"Isn't that Mr. Schiff in the Oval Office?" asked Georgia innocently, pointing to the French doors, where she had in fact detected some movement inside. Pettis turned to look. Georgia deliberately blanked out her mind so she wouldn't think about what she was doing or hesitate, and she deftly slipped the blue bug into Pettis's jacket pocket. Her hand did not tremble. Pettis got up and stubbed out the remains of his Tiparillo in the ash can.

"The meeting might have broken up. I didn't get the call, but I'd better go check and see if the boss is clocking out for the night," he said. "Can you get your guy to price some of those Havanas you mentioned? I haven't smoked a rolled Havana in years."

"I'll ask next time I see him," she promised. He walked off toward the Oval Office. Georgia took out her phone and quickly texted *Blue on COS main goon and driver,* called up a photo of an androgynous rock star who performed wearing nothing but a huge strap-on dildo and painted over the WPB message, then texted to Talia *He'll be at the JFK Center reception, make sure Marvin brings you,* then sent the message. Then she finished her cigarette and watched for Pettis to re-appear. He didn't.

Pettis actually interrupted a heated discussion in the Oval Office between President Hunter Wallace, Ronald Schiff, and Angela Herrin. Ronald looked up as Pettis came in and said, "Oh, good, I was about to call you, Elmore. I'm outta here." Schiff got up. "Mr. President, you have a choice. You can make history during your Fourth of July address tomorrow by announcing that the missiles have been launched and the war is over except for the mopping up, that you have kept your lifelong

promise to the American people and reunified the nation, and that a ghastly mistake which was made twelve years ago has been corrected. You can then rest assured of a third term, a fourth, who knows? The sky is the limit for the man who serves the Chosen of God, as you used to understand. Or else you can come across as a mumbling schmuck and announce that we fucked up, that the United States of America is going to crawl on our bellies to devils in human form, and from now humanity has to live with a nation-state based on a moral inversion that will poison the rest of history with an antediluvian hatred that should have perished from the earth forever in 1945, but which you are too spineless to end." He turned to Angela Herrin. "Maybe you can talk some sense into him. Mr. President, tomorrow afternoon I am going to sit down with Senator Nivens and talk about his future. It's up to you what I tell him." Schiff stalked out of the room.

Angela sighed in exasperation. "Hunter, *why* won't you do this for us? You've always been so *reasonable* about everything else we've asked of you? Why balk at this one last favor?"

Wallace's face was that of a small, stubborn little boy. "Number one, because I don't appreciate being bullied, Angela. I know that the world owes a historic debt to the Jewish people and I have always been willing for this country to pay it, especially after what that bird-brained bimbo Chelsea did. But you might remember who is in fact the actual President of the United States, and you might at least show a little respect instead of treating me like a six-year-old who won't eat his vegetables! The second thing is that you and Ronnie are being as brave as lions with my ass, and don't you think I don't know it! I'm the one who's going to get the blame for the Canadians probably having to permanently evacuate the city of Vancouver, I'm the one who's going to have to carry the can for all the fallout and somehow find the money to pay compensation and to repair the damage all over the country, and that means I'm the one who is going to go down in history as the trigger-happy president who couldn't find any other way to win the great game besides kicking over the table! You realize there are going to be survivors, at least a few, and that at least some of them are going to be kids? What kind of optics will that make on CNN?"

"We won't let them get on TV, and anyway they're racist kids," said Angela. "Kids who were going to be raised as racists and Jew-haters if you hadn't stepped in."

"Do you think the bulk of the American people have sense enough to grasp that, Angela?" demanded Wallace. "Christ, you of all people should know what dumb-asses they are! You've helped me pull the wool over their eyes often enough. That's all I need, heart-rending pictures on the six o'clock news of cute little white kiddies with radiation burns! What do you think that will do to my approval ratings?"

"Hunter, you know damned well we can give you any ratings you want!" said Angela impatiently. "We can give you a ninety-nine point nine percent approval rating if you like, although I wouldn't recommend it since we do need to retain a little credibility. We can shit-can any media coverage of radiation-burned kiddies. We can assure you the biggest re-election landslide in American history—we count the votes, remember? I always thought you got it—*we can do anything we want*, morally because we are God's Chosen people, and practically because we're smarter than everybody else. But you have to work with us on this."

The phone on Wallace's desk rang and he hit the intercom. "Yes?" he said irritably.

"Admiral Brava for you," said a voice. Wallace picked up the receiver. "Yes, Admiral." He listened for a minute. "Dear Christ in Heaven!" he moaned. "I'll be right down." He stood up.

"What is it?" asked Angela.

"The racists have launched a major assault on Anaconda," said Wallace. "They're attacking from the west with the setting sun behind them. Planes, rockets, and they've brought in their crack SS units and Panzers. It looks like they're trying to wipe out a whole American army in some kind of Custer's Last Stand, and from what little communication is getting through to the Centcom in the Pentagon, they may succeed. Also, the Anaconda relief column has been enveloped by the enemy army from Wyoming and they seem to be falling apart."

"In God's name, you *shlumpf,* what will it take to make you do what has to be done?" shouted Angela angrily. "Patterson has the football in his safe, just down the hall! He can be here in twenty minutes, along

with General Fein and Colonel Rabinowitz!" The briefcase containing the nuclear attack codes for the U.S. Strategic Defense Command was called the "football." For years it had been carried everywhere with the President of the United States by an aide, but in the year 1998, Bill Clinton had become distracted by the Monica Lewinsky scandal and lost the briefcase somewhere, after which it was kept either in the Pentagon, or in the office safe of the White House military attaché, who in this administration was Lieutenant Colonel Pat Patterson. After an incident in which Hillary Clinton attempted to stave off impeachment proceedings by attacking China, but was talked down by her lesbian lover of the time, only the attaché had the combination to the safe. In order to get the briefcase with the codes, the President had to convince the attaché and two other field grade officers that he or she was neither insane nor under the influence of drugs or liquor. Wallace started at the names of the other officers, two of the highest-ranking Jews in the military. Fein was Quartermaster General, a position he apparently parlayed into an eight-figure income that was the target of intermittent media reports and Congressional investigations, while Rabinowitz was a public relations specialist. "Got your own crew standing by, eh, Angela?" demanded Wallace. "Don't you trust Scheisskopf and Brava to sign off that I've got all my marbles?"

"They're interested parties," said Angela. "Too interested. They might make problems. Best to present them with a *fait accompli*."

Wallace shook his finger at her. "You see! That's—*that's* what the fuck I'm talking about, making all these plans without consulting me, like I was just a glove and you're the hand!" He stormed out.

In the meantime Georgia had strolled calmly up to the French doors of the Oval Office, figuring she'd try the White House mess to see if she could locate Mordecai Kravitsky there, but when she looked through the glass panes she was astounded to see none other than Angela Herrin herself standing on the famous carpet with the Presidential seal, staring after the departing president, mad as a wet hen. Alone. *Bob once told me that when the white man began to fight back, somehow, his luck changed and things started to fall into place,* Georgia thought. *Jesus, I guess he was right! How lucky is this?*

Georgia had no idea how she'd pull this off, and there were of course cameras inside the Oval Office as well as audio recorders, but she palmed the red-striped chip in her left hand, opened the French doors and stepped inside. Angela turned and saw her. "You lost, blondie?" the Jewess snarled.

"No, Ms. Herrin, there was nothing on TV so I decided I'd go have a smoke in the Rose Garden," said Georgia calmly.

"Well, you need to get your ass back up to the residence bedroom. That's your work station, I believe?" said Angela icily. This was clearly not an invitation for a cozy chat. Georgia didn't see how she could prolong the encounter much less slip the GPS on the woman, and so in her mind she switched back to Plan B and figured she'd go find Kravitsky. Georgia started to move around her without a word to leave the room, but suddenly Angela took her arm, and on her face was a careful, rueful smile.

"Wait! I'm sorry, Ms. Halberstam, that was inexcusably rude of me, and I apologize," she said. Georgia was astounded at how quickly the Jewish woman did a complete 180 in attitude. "I've been having a very bad day, a terrible day, in fact, and I took it out on you. Please forgive me. I know we don't know one another, but do you mind if we sit down and have a little talk? I'm going to have a drink. God knows I need one. How about you?" She moved to the presidential sideboard.

"I'll just take a ginger ale or a club soda or something," said Georgia, sliding carefully down into an armchair in one corner if the office, facing another chair. It was the first time since she had been at the White House that anybody had ever invited her to sit down in the Oval Office itself.

"Suit yourself," said Angela, going to the sideboard and pouring out a ginger ale and then hefting a liquor bottle over a glass. "I'm having a large V&T myself." She came over and handed Georgia the ginger ale, then sat down and took a heavy slug of her vodka and tonic. "Ms. Halberstam, I'm hoping you can help me. I'm hoping you *want* to help me, and help the country as well. I understand that you're from Montana originally, and that you and your mother had to flee from your home state when the Nazis took over twelve years ago?"

"They're not all Nazis," said Georgia before she could stop herself. "I mean, Hitler-type Nazis. Some of them are Christian fundamentalists and Odinists and whatnot," she added hastily.

Angela Herrin shrugged. "To us they're all Nazis," she said. "It's as handy a term as any. But whatever they are, they are the people who drove you out of your home and made you a refugee when you were only a child, and so I assume you have no love for them. I know Marvin Halberstam casually, and he once mentioned to me that you and your mother had a rather adventurous time of it escaping from the Northwest."

"I don't think adventurous is quite the term," said Georgia.

"Of course not," said Angela soothingly. "It must have been horrible. But would you like to be able to go back to Montana someday?"

"Very much," said Georgia with a nod.

"Well, that may be possible, but we need your help. That is, the responsible elements in the Cabinet need you to use your, ah, unique access to the President to persuade him that he has to take certain steps in order to win the war, which I'm sure you've realized isn't going as well as we had hoped by this stage."

You mean you're getting your asses kicked by the NDF, thought Georgia. "Yeah, I kind of picked up on that," she said. "What steps are you talking about?"

"Ah, well, there's the problem," said Angela. "Hunter is a very proud man, and like most proud men he doesn't like to feel as if he's being manipulated by the women in his life, even when he is, if you get my drift. I can't tell you anything specific about the actual policy the President needs to implement. It's classified top secret, and if I tell you anything I would not only be violating national security laws, but if you were to let slip any details he would know that I talked to you, and he would think he's being manipulated."

"But you *do* want me to manipulate him," said Georgia. "Although I don't understand how I can do that if I don't know what you want him manipulated into doing. In any case, what's in it for me?" Georgia understood that a Jew would expect such a question, and it would be out of character for her own high-class hooker persona not to make such a remark.

"How about a ten million dollar bonus?" said Angela seriously.

"You have my full attention, Ms. Herrin," said Georgia. "But how do I earn that ten mil, if you won't tell me what it is you want me to persuade the President to do? That's assuming I can persuade him of anything, which I can't guarantee. We don't exactly conduct deep political and philosophical discussions on policy and statecraft when we're together."

"I understand that, Ms. Halberstam," said Angela. "What I would like for you to do is to apply a kind of psychological massage that will make him more receptive to the whole concept of complying with our advice, that is to say chief of staff Schiff's and mine as well as the advice of certain Cabinet officers like Secretary Chalupiak, who also lost someone near and dear to her at the hands of the Nazi murderers. Tell me, have you ever discussed your past with the President?"

"Not really, although before I came here I discussed it with damned near everybody else," said Georgia. "He knows I'm from the Northwest, of course. I had to go through all kinds of security clearance bullshit, and the Secret Service has a file on me that could probably tell you what I had for breakfast on this day three years ago, so I assume Hunter knows all about me, but he's never asked. It's not my past he's interested in."

"No, of course not," said Angela, giving her a once-over glance that made Georgia wonder if the stories she'd heard about all Jewish women being bisexual were true. "What I want you to do, Ms. Halberstam, is to talk to President Wallace about your past, in private when he's in a listening mood, in great and heart-rending detail. Tell him about your idyllic childhood in Montana that was ripped from you by hatred and cruelty. Can you do that?"

"Yes, I can do that," said Georgia with a nod. *You'd better believe it, sister,* she thought.

Angela Herrin went on: "From what I gather from Marvin and from reading that extensive file you mentioned, I understand the reality was bad enough, but don't hesitate to embroider a bit. I want you to let him know how badly you want to go back to Montana and see your childhood home again, but how terrible it is that you can't do so as long as those evil men are in power, how horrible it was to be chased

by dogs and racists with guns across the snow as you and your mother were fleeing to freedom . . ."

Fleeing to the next interstate exit with a Sheraton sign, thought Georgia. *Let me get this straight, bitch: you're trying to get me to psych up the Doughboy to drop a nuclear warhead on my father and my brother and my baby nephew, without knowing what I'm doing, for which you are willing to pay me a lot of money, so that makes it all right. Christ, the Party is right about you people! Now shut the fuck up and give me some opportunity to put this bug on you, so you can die tonight!*

Suddenly Angela's phone rang. She carried it in a leather pocket on the outside of her Gucci handbag, which was on a table at the end of the Oval Office sofa. She got up, walked over, picked up the bag, pulled out the phone, and said "Yes?" into it. She listened intently to whoever was on the other end, moving back toward the two chairs where she and Georgia were sitting, the purse in her hand. "I'm still trying to bring him around," she said. "I'm talking to someone now who might be able to help, in fact."

Angela glanced at Georgia and realized she probably shouldn't be speaking about this in the clear, and so she switched to Hebrew, a language that sounded to Georgia like a tuberculosis patient choking on his own diseased lung phlegm. She threw the handbag down on the seat where she had been sitting and turned away from Georgia, who slid her hand over and was about to open the bag when she saw the small telltale LED light at the end of the zipper which told her that the bag was alarmed. Unless she knew what stud or special hidden switch or accessory to touch or flip, if she tried to open the purse it would beep or blat or screech or in some way warn the owner it was being tampered with. In a world when wealthy white and Jewish women were prime criminal targets not just for rape but for simple robbery, Georgia had heard of high-end purses and handbags that blew indelible dye in the faces of thieves who stole them and tried to open them, even electrocuted anyone who tried to cut them open. It made sense that the White House press secretary would own such a bag. It meant she couldn't open the damned thing to plant the tracking device.

Then she saw the empty phone pocket or pouch on the outside of the handbag. Angela Herrin was turned away from her, gabbling

in Hebrew to whoever was calling her. Georgia took a quick glance around the ceiling corners of the Oval Office and spotted both small CCTV cameras. She knew there was also a small fiber optic lens in the President's personal computer terminal for video conferencing, but which could also be used to monitor the office. The screen was turned away from her. Georgia got up clumsily out of her chair, holding her empty ginger ale glass in one hand and steadying herself on the arm of the opposite chair where Angela's purse lay. Hoping her body and the back of the chair would shield what she was doing from the spy cameras, Georgia slipped the thumbnail-sized red microchip into the leather phone pocket or holster, and then walked to the sideboard and put the glass down on a coaster. She turned to Angela, who was still speaking in Hebrew to her unknown caller, and whispered, *"I have to get upstairs. He'll expect me to be there when he goes up himself."*

Angela took the phone away from her head. *"I understand,"* she whispered back. *"We'll talk later."*

Georgia walked out of the Oval Office. When she got upstairs to the unmonitored presidential bedroom she texted a quick message, *Red on the bitch*. She concealed it in a savage political cartoon from the Washington *Post* showing a Kali-like Hunter Wallace gripping a snake with a Swastika on it, with four fists and arms marked Group South, Group Center, Group North, and Soaring Eagle. She sent the message with a silly sexual innuendo to Talia Halberstam, regarding the accuracy of the four arms depiction. Apparently, the *Post's* cartoonist was a bit behind on the military developments of the past few days, but then most of the American people had no idea that they were losing the war. They were still being shown videos from two weeks before of the three Baghdad Boogies beginning, as well as stirring live reports from journalists embedded within the three columns, most of which were outright fakes generated by computers and performed by professional actors.

* * *

Lieutenant Bob Campbell sat in a small room under the eaves of the Renwick Gallery, surrounded by old American masters including a couple of Grandma Moses winter landscapes in watercolor, and several

Buckminster Fuller geodesic architecture models from the 1930s and 1940s. The ancient curator, Doctor Herrick, had provided him with a large hero sandwich and a bottle of water, pointed out the alarms and motion detectors on the top floor, and left him to his vigil. Campbell had spoken briefly to Herrick before he left. "I'm told you knew the Old Man?" he had asked.

"Never met him," replied Herrick.

"But Major Cardinale said you were personally converted by the Old Man," said Bob.

"I was, but not in person, if you see the difference," said Herrick. "Long, long ago the Old Man used to do an internet radio broadcast once a week. Northwest Freedom or something like that, I can't even remember what it was called, and I had to destroy all my downloads and copies once it became a death penalty offense to possess them."

"Radio Free Northwest," said Campbell. "We're taught about that in history class and they play some excerpts for the students. He converted you with his podcasts?" asked Campbell.

"He did not," replied old Herrick. "I was an arrogant imbecile and I thought I knew better than he did about what was what. I did not. I viewed his podcasts as entertainment, not something to actually be listened to, taken seriously, and certainly not acted upon. Northwest Migration wasn't something anyone actually *did;* it was something one tapped a keyboard about on the internet. The result of my refusal to listen and act is that my life became a living hell, and by the time I realized that the Old Man's rantings about Northwest Migration were meant to be acted upon, and not laughed at or languidly discussed on effete pseudo-intellectual blogs, it was too late. My three children were all dead. My son became a heroin addict and died of an overdose. My oldest daughter was raped and murdered by niggers when she had a flat tire up in Maryland one night, while my youngest daughter married a Mexican from Aztlan and was beaten to death by her husband while she was pregnant. I have several mestizo grandchildren whom I have never seen, and have no intention of seeing. They have nothing to do with me, and they may have died in a V-3 attack on California for all I know or care. My wife went insane and died in a mental institution many years ago."

"Euthanized?" asked Bob sympathetically.

"I think so, but I can't prove it."

"Why didn't you Come Home after Longview?" asked Campbell.

"I didn't act when I should have, and my family paid for it. Why should I gain from their suffering?" replied Herrick bleakly. "I didn't Come Home because I haven't earned it. Stupidity comes with a price, young man, and I haven't paid my tab yet. I do what I do for Vince on occasion as part of settling up that tab."

"You ever meet a girl named Betsy?" asked Robert glumly. "You two seem to have a lot in common."

"Yes, I have met Betsy and I know her story," said Herrick. "I wish to hell somebody could persuade her to Go Home. What happened to me and my family was my fault. I simply assumed that what the Old Man was talking about was all impossible, that nothing would ever actually happen. The very idea that anything would ever actually change or that anyone would ever actually *do* any of what he was talking about was absurd. It never even entered into my thinking. So I didn't listen and I didn't act when I should have, and those I loved paid a hideous price because I was a lazy dumb-ass who didn't have sense enough to realize that Rome was burning even with the Old Man bellowing it in my ear. I had a choice, and I chose not to listen. Betsy didn't. I did something, by default, by *not* doing anything, which is another way of doing something, if you get my rather confusing drift there. Betsy had things *done* to her. She deserves to Go Home. Do what you can to convince her, if the subject ever comes up."

Bob had a small pair of field glasses through which he could view the famous façade of the White House across the North Lawn, now lit up with floodlights in the darkness of the hot summer night. He thought of Georgia inside. He wondered what she was doing, and then decided he didn't want to know. Then his phone bleeped. He flipped it open, saw the stupid cartoon, decrypted and read her second message *Red on the bitch*, and forwarded it to Cardinale. Then he settled down to wait. It was out of his hands now.

Bob was tense with worry about what might happen to his WPB comrades, but the armchair Herrick had given him for his little observation post was comfortable, and he actually managed to fall asleep

for a while, until Herrick nudged him awake sometime later. "Thought you might like to know how we did," said the old man, extending his own phone. Bob looked down at the screen and saw that it was tuned to CNN. An Asian female announcer who actually looked pale beneath her makeup was speaking:

"Repeating the hour's top story, two murderous terror attacks in Washington, D.C., have stunned the nation's capitol tonight. A D.C. Metro Police spokesperson says that at eleven thirty-five p.m., White House press secretary Angela Herrin and her bodyguard, former Israeli Army Major Mordecai Krivitsky, were shot to death outside Ms. Herrin's elegant town home on Twelfth Street Northeast in the D.C. suburb of Brookland. At almost the same time, White House Chief of Staff Ronald Schiff and two members of his Secret Service security escort detail were murdered in an attack on his limousine outside a downtown Washington nightclub, using a bomb or some other kind of explosive to penetrate the vehicle's armor. A second government limousine was also damaged in the terrorist attack. No details are yet available on . . ."

"Any of our guys hurt?" demanded Bob.

"No, they all E&E'd clean," replied Herrick. "I talked to Vince. They caught Schiff on 14th Street just as he pulled up to the Black Cat Club, with one of those Panzerfaust rockets. I don't know if you've seen them, but they disassemble until you can fit one into a briefcase, and the warhead is only fourteen ounces."

"Yeah, they showed me," said Bob.

"Anyway, they work. Went through the armor in that limo like a hot knife through butter," said Herrick with a chuckle. "I know because downstairs I have access to a raw news feed for a couple of cable networks, and they showed the remains. That car looked like a child's toy that had been put into a microwave, and it looked like they were trying to scrape Schiff off the back seat with spatulas."

"How about Angie baby?" asked Bob. "I understand she was the main presidential handler for the Sanhedrin or whatever organized Jewry calls itself these days."

"Aron Habrit, which means Ark of the Covenant," said Herrick. "The idea being that the Torah has now been taken out of the holy

land of Israel and the Jewish people throughout the world are now the ark which holds the covenant between God and Abraham, their usual quasi-mystical horse shit. Anyway, the Herrin woman paid the price for living in a toney *goyische* old money neighborhood: no covered parking. Caught 'em on the front steps of the brownstone. Two of the team riddled the big Jew with Uzi bullets, which I think is poetically appropriate, and Duke got Yentl with a neck shot so she strangled on her own blood. Kind of a variation on kosher slaughter."

"And they're all away clean?" asked Bob again.

"Every one, thanks to the fact that some electronics whiz kid Vince dug up was able to track the targets, make a plan and run interference for the teams surveillance camera-wise," said Herrick. "He told me to tell you to keep an eye out for any unusual activity around the Heart of Darkness down there and be ready to hit Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck if necessary, whatever that means."

"I know what it means," said Campbell. "If it turns out it's not necessary, I'll need to ease on out of here and into downtown about eight in the morning, just as the rush hour begins, which in a way is good because I'll have a lot of cover on the street. I need to pick someone up, and then we're out of here, permanently."

Herrick looked down at him in the chair. "I haven't been fully briefed on what you're doing here, son, and I have no need to be, but I wasn't born yesterday. I figure we've got somebody in the belly of the beast tonight. Whoever they are, they must be one hell of a soldier."

"Yep," said Bob.

"Well, if I don't see you again before you leave, good luck," said Herrick.

"We've had great luck so far," said Bob Campbell. "Phenomenal luck. Now please God it lasts just a few more hours."

* * *

Special Agent in Charge Lee Lyons of the Secret Service was not completely politically naïve. He sensed that POTUS was on the edge, and he was enough of a realist to understand that this was not good for the country or for his career, and he needed to tread carefully and keep

every angle covered. For this reason, when word arrived at the White House that Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff had been assassinated, instead of immediately informing the president, he called over to the official residence on Observatory Circle and routed Vice President Hugh Jenner out of bed. Jenner was dressed and back at the White House in 20 minutes. "Are we in any doubt as to who did this and why?" he asked Lyons.

"I think the more germane question would be the *how,* Mr. Vice President," replied Lyons. "We've always known since Longview that there was an NAR intelligence network in D.C., two in fact, one from the War Prevention Bureau and one run by their Combined Military Intelligence, and down through the years we've picked up traces and signs of their activity, but nothing concrete until the events outside the South African embassy a few weeks ago when they seem to have pushed Kanesha Knight over the edge into insanity."

"Are they that good, or do we really suck?" asked Jenner.

"A bit of both, sir," replied Lyons honestly. "I think everyone in government is aware of the weaknesses in the FBI's performance for the past generation, for reasons we are not allowed by law to discuss."

"Because the Bureau is full of incompetent affirmative action hires who are there because they have dark skin or tits," said Jenner flatly.

"I didn't hear that," said Lyons quickly. "Basically, the FBI is great at fabricating cases against political targets, which is all they were really required to do before the armed insurgency began in the Northwest. With the Edgar Steele case back in 2010, they were able successfully to fabricate audio evidence and get a conviction, aided by a bent judge who refused to allow any forensics or expert witness testimony from the defense. From that point on, most of the Bureau's work became political, fabricating cases against people the United States government wanted to shut up and disappear. Their technical people could create totally believable video and audio footage that would prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that you and I conspired together to hire a hit man to murder the Dalai Lama, if it was deemed politically desirable. But given the political nature of their mission and the political criteria for their personnel, the FBI became complete stumblebums when it comes to for-real spy catching, and have been for decades.

"The Walker family spied for eighteen years and earned over a million dollars from the Russkis, and the only reason John Walker was ever caught was because he was too cheap to pay his ex-wife alimony and she turned him in. Jonathan Pollard failed every psych test and lied on his vetting forms, his behavior was so erratic that even his co-workers at Naval Intelligence thought he was nuts and tried to get his clearance revoked, and the FBI only paid attention when he was actually caught on a security camera stealing and photocopying classified documents. One of the primary, if unspoken, rationales for creating the Department of Homeland security after Nine-eleven was that the FBI was so clearly incapable. The ESMA here in the District is an attempt to counteract our own counter-intelligence incompetence by simply spying on everybody all the time."

"And even that doesn't seem to have worked!" said Jenner bitterly.

"No, sir," agreed Lyons.

"You know that there is—was—a serious policy disagreement over the conduct of the war within the special Cabinet and Joint Chiefs committee that meets in the Situation Room?" asked Jenner.

"Yes, sir," said Lyons with a nod. "It's kind of hard for the staff here *not* to know, with all the yelling that goes on down there and in the Oval Office and in the corridors. We do have ears, you know. Ms. Herrin and Mr. Schiff wanted to launch a full nuclear strike at the Northwest. So did Secretary Chalupiak, and I assume she still does. Admiral Brava, General Scheisskopf, and yourself are against it. Secretary Modlin agrees with whoever spoke last, Secretary Bagwell turned into a chicken, and no one knows which way the president is going to jump on it. Now, my question, sir, is how did the Northmen know who in the War Cabinet was pushing for the nuclear strike, and how did they know where to find Ms. Herrin and Mr. Schiff tonight?"

"You think the NAR has somebody inside the White House?" asked Jenner, his blood running cold.

"I do, sir," said Lyons. "I will go so far as to say that I think it's the president's special friend of the moment, Ms. Halberstam."

"Do you have any evidence for that suspicion other than the fact that she was born in Montana?" asked Jenner.

"None, sir, but I was always against her coming here. Her background check revealed a completely amoral character."

Jenner gave him a tired and disgusted smile. "Lee, let's be completely honest here. Any woman who will put up with what Hunter Wallace does in the bedroom, for any amount of money, is going to be at least half a freak. You're not going to get Rebecca of Sunnybrook farm doing the afternoon shift in there in the executive lounge."

"I am aware of that, sir, and yes, we've had some real lady freaks in that slot in the past," said Lyons. "In this woman's case, it's just a feeling. Call it a cop's gut instinct."

"The president is very fond of this young lady and he is going to be, well, distraught when we tell him what happened to his press secretary and his chief of staff tonight," said Jenner. "I don't think it would be wise to compound the shock of tonight's news by flat-out accusing his favorite mistress of the past few years of being a Nazi spy. Plus I happen to be one of these old dinosaurs who doesn't believe in charging someone with a capital crime without some kind of proof and then torturing a confession out of them. What can I tell you? I'm an old fuddy-duddy that way."

"So what should we . . . ?" Lyons suddenly remembered that Jenner was not empowered to issue orders to the Secret Service. "Ah, what would you recommend, Mr. Vice President?"

"I would recommend putting a special security watch on her down in the control room, including activating the secret cameras in the bathrooms which we all know you have already installed," said Jenner. "Watch every move she makes. Go over all her phone calls, which I know you intercept and at least archive. Check them out for anything that seems suspicious. Then we should . . ."

The door to the Oval Office opened and a uniformed Army major appeared at Jenner's side. "Mr. Vice President, you're needed in the situation room," he said. His face was almost green.

"I'm not the commander-in-chief, Major," said Jenner irritably.

"No, sir," said the officer with a gulp. Tears formed in his eyes. "But we think you need to be the one to wake the president and tell him what's happened. It's bad news."

"Spit it out, man!" snapped Jenner.

"Combined Military Group South is gone, sir," said the major, openly weeping now. "It no longer exists. We received General Logan's last transmission from Bowman Field in Anaconda as the goddamned SS was overrunning his position, and the town is gone as well. Re-taken by the NDF. They wouldn't allow any of our people to even surrender. It looks like they killed them all. Two hundred and twenty-five thousand soldiers and U.S. Marines who left Billings two weeks ago on a Baghdad Boogie, now they're wiped out. It's the worst military disaster in this nation's history. And the relief column, sir . . ."

"Go on," ordered Jenner, dazed and in shock.

"They've broken up."

"What the devil do you mean?" demanded the Vice President.

"The enemy army moving north from Wyoming beat them to Billings, occupied the city, and then hit our column in the darkness just outside town, at a place called Huntley," said the major. "They've broken up. They're running, sir. They're just throwing down their weapons and running for their lives through the night, every man for himself."

"Dear God!" whispered Jenner, appalled.

"We have to wake the president," said Lee Lyons in a dull voice.

"Not yet," said Jenner. "Major, have Admiral Brava and General Scheisskopf been informed of this catastrophe yet?"

"Yes, sir," said the officer. "They're at the Pentagon war room now monitoring what fragmentary radio and other communications are coming in. They figure Group Center at Fairfield and Group North at Ponderay are next in line."

"Get them over here," said Jenner. "Not Chalupiak or Modlin. We will wake the president together. We have to end this."

* * *

Casualty summary as of 0600 hours EDT, July 4th

NDF military casualties—9,389 dead and 14,039 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—3,908 dead and 5,873 wounded
United States military casualties—312,290 dead and 100,657 wounded

United States civilian casualties—145,765 dead and 402,938 wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents, casualties overwhelmingly non-white

Aztlan military casualties—Est. approx. 195,000 dead, 168,000 wounded including those killed in Aztlan civil conflict beginning around June 30.

Aztlan civilian casualties—Unknown number wounded, gassed, or sickened from biowar agents or killed in civil unrest during the collapse of Aztlan.

XIX

The Price
(July Fourth)

Courage is the price that life exacts for granting peace.
—Amelia Earhart

At five o'clock on the morning of July the Fourth, a grim group of men walked down the upstairs hall of the East Wing of the White House and knocked on the door of the presidential bedroom. They were Vice President Hugh Jenner, Admiral Hector Brava, General Albert Scheisskopf, and Special Agent in charge Lee Lyons, who was acting as escort to the Vice President on this occasion. Jenner knocked long and loud and called out, "Mr. President! This is Hugh Jenner. We need to speak with you. The matter is urgent."

Hunter Wallace finally opened the door, wearing pajamas and belting a bathrobe around his waist. "What the hell, Hugh?" he demanded.

"Mr. President, we have some bad news," said Jenner formally. "Could you please close the door and step into the hall? This information is significantly above Ms. Halberstam's security clearance level, and I would prefer that she didn't overhear."

Once the door was closed and Wallace stood with them in the hallway, Jenner remorselessly laid it all out. "We have news from Montana, and it couldn't be worse. Combined Military Group South has ceased to exist. It has been almost completely wiped out by the enemy in a night attack, in a matter of hours."

"Almost?" asked Wallace woodenly.

Scheisskopf spoke up. "We are getting some scattered radio chatter which indicates that a few isolated companies and smaller units down to squad level, even individual soldiers, may have broken out of the

encirclement and are attempting to fight their way eastward, back onto United States soil."

"May I remind you that the entire state of Montana is United States soil, General," said Wallace in a wooden voice.

"Of course, Mr. President," replied Scheisskopf soothingly.

Not good, thought Hugh Jenner. *Only a nodding acquaintance with reality, and that may be receding in his rear view mirror fast. Not good.* He went on, "It gets worse. The relief column headed toward Anaconda was defeated and dispersed outside Billings last night by the Nazi Seventh Army, who are now entering the city."

"Dispersed? What do you mean dispersed?" demanded Wallace.

"I mean they were reduced to a panic-stricken rout, and they are now running from the enemy in complete disorder. It's been a very bad twenty-four hours. What you have to understand, Mr. President, is that the United States has lost the war. In point of fact, the war was lost within the first twenty-four hours, because without massive and overwhelming air power and high-technology surveillance, the United States military is a second-rate fighting force at best due to the poor mental and moral quality of the people who comprise it. But that's spilled milk. We have to deal with the reality on the ground. Group Center and Group North are now in extreme danger. They are isolated and surrounded by vastly superior forces, and the best we can hope for is to extricate those men with their lives intact, so that the United States of America still has at least a few soldiers left. I have a sneaking suspicion that once the magnitude of this total cluster-fuck can no longer be concealed from the American people, and the whole world understands what has happened in the past two weeks, we are going to need all the armed men we can to keep order and maintain our own positions. You have to make the call, Mr. President."

"Make what call?" asked Wallace.

"Send the e-mail, make the TV or internet transmission, however it is to be done, and I admit that even I'm not sure how we get in touch with them," admitted Jenner. "But in some way, you have to make the call to the commander-in-chief of the enemy armed forces, President Henry Morehouse of the Northwest American Republic. The nation we are at war with, and which will now remain a nation, because we

have failed. You have to negotiate the withdrawal of our remaining forces alive from their present state of encirclement and siege, and you have to try and broker a peace that will at least keep them from grabbing any more of the United States or Canada and getting more non-white and Jewish people to exterminate. We've lost, sir. You have to pick up the pieces now."

The president ignored him as if he had not spoken. "I'm sorry to hear about the loss of so many fine American fighting men and women," said Wallace. Jenner noticed the president's hands beginning to tremble and his eyes beginning to twitch and roll a bit. *Definitely not a good sign,* thought the Vice President to himself. Jenner had always been of the private opinion that Hunter Wallace was not completely stable in his mind, and that any major setback or a serious crisis that threatened his massive ego might produce unfortunate results. "Obviously we need to convene an emergency meeting of the War Cabinet to consider what measures to take. I think we all know what advice Angela and Mr. Schiff and Secretary Chalupiak will proffer, and in light of these developments, perhaps I need to reconsider . . ."

"Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff won't be proffering you any advice ever again, Mr. President," said Jenner brutally. "They're both dead. They were assassinated last night, just before midnight, at almost the same time but in different locations in the District of Columbia. They were shot and bombed by unknown assailants, although I don't think we need to offer any prizes for guessing who those assailants were."

Lee Lyons spoke up. "Mr. President, since this seems to have become a war of assassination now, I have ordered special security units to the homes of Secretary Chalupiak, Secretary Modlin, and all the rest of the Cabinet, and emergency protocols will be in force for the duration . . ."

"Angela and Ron?" said Wallace, gaping at them. "Both of them dead?"

"Yes, sir," said Jenner.

"You idiot!" shouted Wallace. "Jesus Christ, what have you done?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" asked the Vice President, nonplussed.

"You don't think I know you did it?" raved Wallace. "Unknown assailants my ass! It was you who had them killed, wasn't it? Of course it was. I always knew that you hated my Jewish advisors, and you were jealous of them because of their special relationship with God and their special relationship with me, but are you really so anxious to save your house or your lot or whatever in Portland that you had them both murdered?"

"What?" said Jenner, dumbfounded.

"It's not just unconscionable, it's fucking *stupid!*" shouted Wallace. "Do you have any idea who you've pissed off now? A world political and financial power so great that they could even survive the total loss of their entire ancestral nation and shrug it off like it was a mere hiccup! Who in God's name do you think has initiated and decided every major world event for the past century? Does the name Bilderberg mean anything to you? Ever heard of the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, the ADL, the Aron Habrit? You're a Freemason, for Christ's sake, so you ought to know who really runs the world!"

"Yes, I *do* know, which is why I would never do anything like that!" cried Jenner in denial. "Jesus, Hunter, do you think I'm stupid enough to bring the Aron Habrit and the Mossad down on my ass?"

"You better hope and pray you can prove you had nothing to do with it, Hugh," warned Wallace. "Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff were considered by their own kind to be *tzaddikim*, living saints whose very existence sanctified the Jewish people in the eyes of God. Now you or somebody has killed them, and I find it mysteriously convenient that their deaths come at a time when the Apocalypse Option is on the table."

"It is not on the table, sir," said Jenner flatly. "It *cannot* be on the table. Going Apocalyptic would damn the United States in the eyes of all mankind for the rest of recorded history, no matter what the cause."

"And this is your decision to make since when?" demanded Wallace. "Maybe that's why Angela and Ron died? They were practice runs so I could be murdered by traitors in my own party and my own White House, in order to save a gang of racist murderers and your stupid house in Portland? Were you in on it?" Wallace demanded of Lyons. "Hughie

here doesn't have his own assets for wet work, so he would have to get some trigger men from somewhere. One of your covert ops squads, Lee? Figure to change horses in midstream, get in good with the next guy in the Oval Office, maybe help put him there, eh?"

"No, sir, you're wrong!" said Lyons, stunned. "I find your insinuation insulting and offensive!"

"Blackwater, then?" mumbled Wallace, his eyes rolling. "Yeah, Blackwater sounds likely. Those goons will kill for anyone who pays them enough." He turned and looked at Admiral Brava and General Scheisskopf. "How about you two? Were you in on it?" He cut their protests short. "Never mind. I don't know whether to believe you, but it doesn't matter. Suddenly it's all clear now. I know what I have to do." He turned and opened the bedroom door, stalked inside, and they could hear the click as he locked it.

"My God, the President of the United States has lost his mind!" breathed Brava.

"And locked himself in with a Nazi spy," muttered Lyons.

"What?" exclaimed Brava.

"Well, maybe," said Lyons with a shrug. "I'm pretty sure the WPB or the CMI or whatever leprechauns pulled these killings off last night have an agent or a source of information in the White House, and I think it may be the president's current bedmate, but I can't prove it. Yet."

"Maybe if it is her she's drugging him, and that's why he's acting so loony?" suggested Jenner. "They seem to have some kind of capability like that. I can't get the pictures of Kanesha Knight being chased through the parking lot by men in white coats and Marlon Bagwell running down the halls of the White House flapping his arms and clucking like a chicken out of my head."

Lyons shook his head. "No, sir, I don't think so. Ever since Clinton the First, the president has always been subjected to random drug-testing and tox-screening by the Secret Service, assisted by the staff at Walter Reed."

"Sounds like a good idea," muttered Scheisskopf. "When I was young and just out of West Point, I knew some officers who served

under Billyboy. Apparently, his nasal passages were as slick as an ice rink."

"His medical records are still classified as top secret even to this day," Jenner told them. "I imagine some of those presidential tox screens down through the years showed up some interesting results."

"Well, Hillary used to test positive for testosterone supplements she took," said Lyons. "She was pretty much a man when she died."

"She always was," said Jenner. "But go on, Agent Lyons."

Lyons nodded and did so. "If a president doesn't voluntarily comply, then the Secret Service has to covertly collect, uh, specimens, which I won't get into, but this president has always given voluntary blood samples. We stepped it up after the Bagwell incident. The president himself was concerned that Mr. Bagwell's behavior might have been biochemical in origin and somebody might have been slipping him a chicky, so to speak. The last time was six days ago, and his blood work came back positive only for Viagra and some alcohol. I have to say in all honesty that President Wallace has never been a drug user, whatever else his . . . well, he's never used drugs, and if Georgia Halberstam or anyone else is doping him, it's not something that's showing up on his tests. Mr. Bagwell and Kanesha Knight were clean, too. Makes you wonder if the Northmen really do have some sort of alien mind control weapon that drives people insane."

"This is America. Our whole world is insane," said Hugh Jenner broodingly. Down the hall, three Secret Servicemen suddenly appeared from the West Wing below, marching in lockstep, led by the huge negro Jimbo Hadding, who looked like a refrigerator in an Armani suit. They walked up to the men in the hall. "Uh, boss man sent for me," said Hadding apologetically to Lyons.

"Nothing unusual in that, James," said Lyons. "You are his personal agent, after all."

"Yes sir, Agent Lyons. But this morning he talking crazy," explained Hadding. "He says you and Mr. Jenner whacked them Jews last night. I told him that can't be, because when there's any killing to be done around the White House I'm the one who's gone be doing it. I'm the nigga who put de black in black ops, so to speak."

"True," said Lyons. "Did he believe you?"

"I think so," said Hadding. "But the man's mind ain't right this morning. I can tell."

"Well, we've had some bad news from the front," said Jenner. "Gentlemen, I think we need to get to the Situation Room."

As they left, Lyons leaned over and said to Hadding, "Jimbo, Georgia Halberstam is now under a Code Two security watch. Last night's events have made people around here a bit more inclined to listen. When you're not actually escorting the president today, I want you to keep up with her whereabouts and follow her around on your phone. I'll send you the feed from the control room. Know where she is at all times, and every second you don't have your eyes on the president, they should be on her. Dig it?"

"Mos' def," said Hadding.

Back in the Situation Room in the West Wing, Admiral Hector Brava turned off the room's internal electronic recording system. "A few words in private, Mr. Vice President," he said. "Is the president going to be all right?"

"Is he flipping his lid?" asked Scheisskopf more bluntly.

"For the moment, yes, but can you blame him?" Jenner told them. "Hunter Wallace's whole career has been aimed at this one moment. Today was supposed to be his hour of triumph. On the nation's birthday, he was supposed to announce that the nation was whole again. Now all that's in the crapper, and when the true dimensions of what has happened finally sink in, the entire country is going to be out for his blood. Including Congress, of course. No Congressional waiver on a third term for our Hunter, and even though he only has a few months left in office, he will almost certainly be impeached out of sheer political bloodlust for revenge, probably successfully for once. The Clintons could all three slither out of it, but Wallace is no Clinton, and this fuck-up is too big for him to dodge. Somebody's got to carry the weight for the first outright defeat this country has ever known. If they don't impeach they'll wait until he's out of office and then prosecute him for criminal incompetence or treason by negligence or something of the kind, and he's made enough enemies so we could see the spectacle of a former president actually doing hard time and giving up the booty."

"Not our first defeat, actually, if you want to look at the historical record," said Brava. "There was the War of 1812 and Vietnam. Hell, the British burned this very house to the ground, and yet today most people don't even remember, and those who do think we won that war. We eventually withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan with armed enemies still in the field against us, which goes against every military definition of victory despite how the politicians may spin it. Maybe the president can spin this?"

"Yeah, well, President James Madison also had the Battle of New Orleans to end that ridiculous little 1812 spat on a high note," pointed out Jenner. "Even though it was fought two weeks after the war ended. Tell me, gentlemen, do either of you have any ideas on how we can throw our president a quick victory in the next few hours that he can spin on TV as an American triumph and get all the yay-hoos chanting 'USA! USA!'?"

"No, sir," admitted Brava.

"Nor do I. But the trouble is, Wallace thinks he has one to hand," said Jenner grimly. "He's got that damned briefcase and those nuclear attack codes, or he will have if he calls the Pentagon and has Patterson bring them, and we have no legal authority to stop him if he does. The fear of losing his legacy and his reputation before history may push him into doing what the kikes and the dyke couldn't."

"But we can talk to him? Is he sane?" persisted Scheisskopf.

"Jesus, I hope so!" said Jenner.

Had Hugh Jenner been able to see into the presidential bedchamber he would have been much more disturbed and much less sanguine about Hunter Wallace's sanity. The normal morning routine was for Georgia to get up early, take a quick shower, get dressed, and leave before the president's own valet arrived at 7 a.m. to lay out fresh underthings, a new shirt and tie, and a newly dry-cleaned suit for the chief executive's workday. Now Wallace was throwing on his clothes from yesterday and making a bollocks out of knotting his tie in the mirror. Unshowered, unshaven, his hair wild and uncombed, he looked like a rabid gopher.

He was also muttering to himself. Georgia watched him from the bed. "What's up, Hunter?" she asked, although she had sneaked a peek at the news on her phone and she already knew what was up. She had

wondered how she would feel when she heard that Angela Herrin and Ronald Schiff and Elmore Pettis were dead because of her, and to her surprise, she didn't feel a thing. It was part of the job. *I guess I must be getting into this Mata Hari gig,* she though to herself. "Secret pre-dawn conferences in the hallway? Sounds serious."

She expected him to tell her about his two staff members who had been blown away the night before. Instead, he turned to her with wild eyes and said, "They're trying to destroy me."

"Huh?" she asked in surprise. "Who's trying to destroy you? The Northwest Republic?" *Well, they are*, she thought.

"Them too, but mostly my own Vice President and those moron Pentagon generals who are too stupid to win a simple war and now they're going to try and blame it all on me they never believed in my vision they never really understood what I understood that you have to get on the right side of the Chosen of God and God will bless one's endeavors that goes for nations as well as individual people but they're too stupid to understand now they've fucked it all up and they think they're going to drag me down and make me carry the weight for this no way José uh uh ain't happening well by God we'll see who's fucking President of these here goddamned United States . . ." Hunter Wallace was still jabbering to himself in the same monotone as he shambled out the door, his fingers still twitching spasmodically at his throat trying to tie his necktie.

Georgia stared after him, and then pulled her phone out of her purse. She quickly texted *You broke his brain* and then covered it with an obscene cartoon and added a text to Talia *I love the smell of Anal-Ease in the morning!* and sent it off, smiling to herself at Robert Campbell's probable reaction on receiving it. She'd learned in the past few months that Bobby was a bit of a prude, a species of person who no longer existed in the U.S.A. She attributed this to his growing up in a society that was struggling back to sanity and decency, and she had come to envy his ability to be shocked and offended by anything. It was a trait she and all Americans had lost long ago. She got up and headed for the shower.

Several minutes later, Special Agent in Charge Lee Lyons got a call from the control room. "Sir, this is Agent McMann," said the voice in

his ear. "Right after POTUS departed the residence, FWOTUS sent out a video text to her stepsister Talia Halberstam. I'm forwarding it to your phone." Lyons waited a few moments, and saw the cartoon.

"What the hell is that?" asked Lyons, staring at it.

"Oh, that's from that new Shep Silverstein cartoon show, sir," said McMann. "*Silly Little Buggers*, the one about the gay school children."

"Oh, yeah. I saw a few of those. They're pretty funny. So she's sending her sister sodomy jokes at six in the morning?" asked Lyons.

"I checked her phone log, sir, and she and Talia Halberstam do a lot of texting back and forth," said McMann.

"Run it through a decrypt program," ordered Lyons. "You have all her other outgoing texts and video texts archived?"

"Of course, sir," said Agent McMann. "Standard procedure."

"Run them all through decrypt while you're at it," Lyons told him. "Get back to me with what you find, if anything."

"Roger that, sir."

Then the whole game changed. President Hunter Wallace stuck his disheveled head out of the Oval Office door and said, "Lee, I'm expecting Colonel Patterson and two other officers to be arriving from the Pentagon in about twenty minutes. When they arrive, please let them through. Until then I don't want to be disturbed."

"Uh, yes, sir," said Lyons, stunned at what he heard. "Would you like the mess to send up some breakfast?"

"Yes, that would be nice," said Wallace. "Angela's dead now, and she's not here to ride my ass about my eating and my weight, so tell the kitchen I'll have a Denver omelet with a side of about six strips of bacon and sausage patties, orange juice, whole wheat toast with real butter and lots of those little plastic packs of grape and apricot jelly. Oh, and a pot of coffee with real cream and sugar." The president closed the door.

So that's what a head of state eats in the early morning hours before he kills ten or twenty million people, mused Lyons. *I wonder what Stalin had for breakfast?* The Secret Service man pulled out his phone, flipped it open, and called Vice President Jenner. "Sir, this is Lyons," he said. "I thought you should know that the president has called for the football. Lieutenant Colonel Patterson is on his way with two other officers, presumably in compliance with the launch protocols."

In the situation room, Jenner put down the phone, aghast. "He's called for the football!" he told Brava and Scheisskopf. "Patterson and two officers will be here in a matter of minutes."

"What officers?" demanded Scheisskopf. "He already has two of the most senior field grade officers in the military right in the building to countersign the launch order!"

"Would you do it, at least in time for his speech this afternoon, so he can tell the world how he blew up the big bad Nazis and sorry if you live a little too far west and you and your kids end up glowing in the dark?" asked Jenner. "It doesn't have to be you two, you know. The statute just says two field grade officers have to certify to the White House military attaché, before he turns over the briefcase and the keys to the briefcase, that the president appears to be lucid, in control of his faculties, and not under the influence of alcohol or fucking methamphetamine. The statute doesn't specify *which* two field grade officers. Wallace isn't Bill Clinton and he's not under the influence, he's just crazy as a shithouse rat. I don't know who these two unnamed officers accompanying Lieutenant Colonel Patterson are, but I would imagine they have been pre-selected for their political reliability. A last present from Angela Herrin before the Northmen caught up with her last night. God, I hope that bitch died hard!"

"God *damn* it!" cursed Brava.

"Admiral, the Pentagon has done studies to extrapolate and predict what would happen if we ever did actually use nuclear weapons against the NAR, am I correct?" asked Jenner.

"Of course, sir," said Brava. "It's ironic. One of the objections that other racists used to throw up against the whole Northwest idea, back in the 'oughts and 'teens when they were all just a bunch of assholes playing with their computers on the internet, was that the Party could never establish a successful independent nation in the Northwest because the U.S. government would simply nuke any such country. The idiots who were jabbering this clearly didn't have clue one as to the reality of just what strategic nuclear weapons are for and what they can do. For the United States to use nuclear weapons anywhere on the North American continent, no matter what the provocation, would be like taking out an attacker by detonating a bomb strapped to your own body. Yeah, you

can stop the assailant from hurting you, but blowing yourself up in the process kind of defeats the whole purpose. Same with this nuclear strike the president is apparently going to order. The prevailing jet stream in North America blows west to east, and the wind does not recognize the Northwest Republic's border or stop at the Mississippi. Even if only a few of those missiles got through the Northmen's plasma ray devices, the fallout would continue on across the upper two thirds of North America, across the Atlantic, over to Europe, etcetera. Wallace probably has this common layman's idea that a nuclear device is just a big firecracker that makes a mushroom cloud and leaves a really big hole in the ground. If more than a handful of the warheads detonate, we could be contaminating the entire northern hemisphere and rendering it uninhabitable, which is basically the last remaining economically and industrially productive part of the world that's still functioning, other than the odd southern hemisphere exceptions like Australia and New Zealand. The fabric of what remains of Western civilization is very thin and weak, Mr. Jenner. Hunter Wallace could be about to bring it all down, not just the Northwest. China and India would step forward to fill the gap and that's all she wrote for the United States and Europe and for . . . well . . ."

"Better not say it," recommended Jenner. "They may have the Situation Room bugged as well. Alien technology or not, Admiral, do you think this Bluelight thing the Northmen have can stop all two hundred of our nuclear missiles?" asked Vice President Jenner.

"I just don't know, sir," said Brava, shaking his head. "They sure as hell did a number on our jets, and even more to the point on our Tomahawks and other Cruises. The number of missiles that actually got through was less than ten percent, and some of those appear to have been knocked off course by hits from the enemy plasma rays."

"So let's guesstimate on the high side and assume a survival rate of ten percent," said Jenner. "Out of two hundred missiles that means twenty nuclear warheads would get through. That's still enough to cause the kind of world-altering radiation contamination and environmental damage the planet can't afford, and depending on where they hit, it might not even win us the war. It might just piss the sons of bitches off.

Then they retaliate with their gas and their germs out of suitcases, all over the country."

"It's closer to two hundred and fifty missiles if Wallace shoots the whole wad, which he'll probably do," said Scheisskopf.

"I thought we had thousands of nuclear warheads?" asked Jenner.

"We do, sir," said Scheisskopf. "Back in the twentieth century we were turning them out like lollipops."

"They're that old?" asked Jenner in surprise.

"Yes, sir," said Scheisskopf. "They've been sitting gathering dust in their bunkers since the 1950s, some of them. We have no shortage of nukes, but what we're short on is functioning ICBMs. Bear in mind, Mr. Vice President, this system has been in existence for almost seventy-five years now, but it's never actually been tried, and so no one knows how or even *if* it will work in the real world. We used to test-fire the missiles on occasion, out over the Nevada desert, but all the environmentalists and peace creeps screamed and hollered and demonstrated, so we haven't even done that in decades. There's never been any serious nuclear threat to this country since the 1990s, at least not from abroad. You can't shoot down a hadji on a Greyhound bus carrying a tactical nuke in the luggage compartment with a three-stage rocket costing eight hundred million dollars a pop, at today's inflated rates. So when the time came every year to see who got the short end of the budget stick, guess who kept getting shorted? But don't worry. Two hundred and fifty missiles aimed at the Pacific Northwest can do damage enough to drop us all deep in the shit, even if only half a dozen of them get through and detonate. For example, suppose we miss Seattle and hit Vancouver?"

"Is that possible?" asked Jenner, aghast.

"We know that some of the incoming Cruises weren't destroyed, but were knocked off course," said Scheisskopf. "Vancouver is just a hop, skip and a jump across the straits from Seattle."

"Who knows?" said Brava with a shrug. "Most of this equipment is at least fifty years old, some of it older. The fire and mission control computers in those silos belong in a museum. Ray gun fire or not, it's possible a missile might miss a target, yes, sir. But if even one gets through to Seattle, Vancouver and most of inhabited British Columbia will be

contaminated by radioactive fallout and dust particles. If Spokane gets splattered good, the fallout and contaminants will fuck up the inhabited southern twenty percent of Alberta and do a number on Calgary."

Jenner scowled. "Meaning that among other things, we will end up with an embittered nation of people who hate us, with good reason, all along our northern border from Montana to Maine, and quite frankly, in the country's present weakened state we can't afford to make an enemy even out of Canada. We've got to stop him!"

"Can you invoke the Twenty-Fifth Amendment, sir?" asked Brava.

"The language of the amendment is unclear as to exactly how a president's incapacitation is to be determined, and by whom," said Jenner. "Section Four says that whenever the Vice President and a majority of either the principal officers of the executive departments or of Congress officially tells the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives in writing that the President is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office, the Vice President shall immediately assume the powers and duties of the office as Acting President."

"Got all that off by heart, have you, sir?" asked Brava, arching his eyebrows.

"I had occasion to look it up recently," replied Jenner coolly. "The problem is time. I suppose if we had more of it, I could fill a conference room with some big dogs from Capitol Hill and persuade them that Hunter Wallace has lost his marbles, which in point of fact seems to be the truth, but Patterson and those two officers are on their way from the Pentagon with the football now."

"You'd need a psychiatrist's opinion that he was nuts," said Brava.

"That's an idea," said Jenner, flipping his phone open. "No time to get a team of shrinks in from Walter Reed and do all the formal ink blot stuff, but I know one shrink who might be willing to sign some kind of statement that the president is irrational, something we can wave under the noses of any Congressional ad hoc committee or whatever. Plus he's Jewish, which is always a plus. Jews invented both psychiatry and insanity to begin with, so he'll have credibility. Agent Lyons? This is Vice President Jenner. I want you to send a couple of your guys to

locate the celebrity shrink, Doctor Jake Shapira, drag his ass out of bed and get him here to the White House. Yeah, him. His office is in the Watergate, I think he lives in Georgetown somewhere. Tell him it's a national security emergency or something and it's top secret, but he has to come now."

"Got it, sir," said Lyons. "Yes, I know Doc Jake. I read his reports to the Secret Service on his governmentally sensitive patients. I need to have a word with him on the mental state of our Ms. Halberstam, see if she's let anything unusual slip about her past or present political and racial attitudes, anything like that. I have his private number on file, so we'll find him and get him here as soon as we can."

Jenner closed his phone and said, "Admiral Brava, General Scheisskopf, is there any way that we can stall or sidetrack Lieutenant Colonel Patterson and whoever is with him on his way from the Pentagon?" His phone buzzed and Jenner flipped it open. He spoke briefly and closed it. "Cancel that. They're here now and headed for the Oval Office. Let's go."

Jenner, Scheisskopf, and Brava managed to intercept the three men in uniform who had just arrived from the Pentagon in the lobby outside the Roosevelt Room. They were Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Pat Patterson, a thin middle-aged officer who was the White House military attaché. Patterson was carrying a white metal briefcase handcuffed to his wrist, and he looked distinctly unhappy. He was accompanied by Major General Russell Fein and Colonel Nathan Rabinowitz. Brava stepped forward. "Thank you for coming, gentlemen," he said, nodding towards Fein and Rabinowitz. "I understand the president has summoned Colonel Patterson for consultation on possible options in view of the current crisis. He's in the Oval Office. General Scheisskopf and I will take you on through, Pat. You gentlemen can wait in the National Security Advisor's office. Can I have the White House mess send you up some coffee or some breakfast?"

General Fein gave his superiors a snappy salute. "The commander-in-chief has specifically requested that Colonel Rabinowitz and myself confer with him on the matter, Admiral," he said.

"That won't be necessary, General," said Scheisskopf. "Admiral Brava and I can take it from here."

"I'm sorry, sir, but I spoke with the president not half an hour ago and he was very specific. He wanted to see Lieutenant Colonel Patterson, Colonel Rabinowitz and myself. Certain decisions have to be made. I believe he plans to give a briefing to the remaining members of the War Cabinet in the Situation Room later." Fein's voice was neutral and polite, but he clearly had no intention of backing down or allowing Brava or Scheisskopf to go in to see the president with them. Scheisskopf and Brava scowled. It was clear that a major military pissing contest was about to be unleashed, when the President Hunter Wallace appeared in the doorway of the Roosevelt room. He no longer resembled a rabid gopher quite so much, but there was something haunted and intense about him, like a man standing on the ledge of a fortieth-floor window who was about to jump. "General Fein is correct, General Scheisskopf," he said. "I need to speak with these three officers from the Pentagon for a bit. You and Admiral Brava will be brought into the loop soon enough. Hugh, could you see if you can round up the entire Cabinet and get them here for a meeting in the Situation Room in one hour's time? Thank you."

"Mr. President, before you proceed, may we speak with you privately?" requested Jenner desperately.

"You may not," said Hunter Wallace, staring at them, his lips and cheeks trembling, his fingers writhing at his side in a bizarre rhumba. "I know what you want to say. You are afraid. You don't want me to use the power God has given me to make the whole world right again. You don't want me to grasp the destiny for which God has shaped me as His servant and the servant of His people. I do not wish to hear anything you have to say. From now on, you will obey orders only, or else I will have you arrested, and don't think I can't find someone willing to use the Dershowitz needles on you three. I wonder what I could get you to confess to?" Wallace giggled. "Oh, yes, that opens fascinating possibilities! But now you bad men go away. I will call you when I need you. If I need you. You gentlemen come with me, please." Wallace turned around and led the three blank-faced Pentagon visitors through the Roosevelt Room and into the Oval Office. They could hear the snap as Wallace locked the door behind him. They stared at one another.

"Dear God, he's going to destroy the world!" said Jenner as they trudged in despair back into the lobby of the West Wing. "Why the hell didn't you men do something? There are what, at least three hundred thousand living American troops who will be in harm's way from those nuclear missiles as well? You're supposed to be men of action. Why didn't you *do* something?" he repeated.

"Like what, sir?" said Brava with a sigh. "He is the fucking *President of the United States*. For forty years I have been trained and conditioned always to obey the commander-in-chief, even when he's insane."

"What did you want us to do?" asked Scheisskopf bitterly. "Pull our sidearms and shoot them all?"

"One would have been sufficient," said Jenner, his blood freezing with horror in his veins at the thought of what was about to happen.

"I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that," said Brava.

"We're good at that in America," said Jenner bitterly. "Pretending we don't hear and see things. Pretending inconvenient facts don't exist. The problem is, they do, and now reality is about to jump up and bite us and the whole world in the ass. Bummer, man, as my hippie parents used to say."

Lee Lyons appeared at Jenner's side. "Doctor Shapira is on the way," he told the Vice President. "I spoke with him on the phone myself."

"You didn't tell him anything, did you?" asked Jenner.

"No, sir, I just said the president was having a bad time personally due to the loss of his two favorite staffers and we thought he needed somebody to talk to. Doctor Shapira will be here in about half an hour. Actually, he seemed quite eager to come."

"I can imagine he did," said Jenner with a wry smile. "Now he's got the ultimate celebrity patient. A madman in the Oval Office waving a nuclear warhead around instead of a junkie in a bodega with a hundred-dollar junk gun."

"But there's something else, sir, if I could have a word in private?" Lyons glanced at the admiral and the general.

"Go ahead, Lee," said Jenner. "This is a crisis and these gentlemen need to know everything."

"I just spoke with Agent McMann down in the control room. On my instructions, he ran a number of archived outgoing phone calls made

by Ms. Georgia Halberstam through a decryption program. Mostly calls to her stepsister, Talia Halberstam. He was looking for anything that might indicate that she's been communicating with suspect groups or individuals, anything political, anything that looked out of place."

"And?" demanded Jenner. "Did he find anything?"

"Is the bitch a goddamned Nazi spy?" grated Scheisskopf.

"Wait, Halberstam's a Jewish name, isn't it?" asked Brava.

"Halberstam is her stepfather's name," explained Lyons. "She's actually gentile. She's officially a Cataclysm Survivor, and she gets the pension, but the fact remains she was born in the Northwest and she still has family there. There's nothing specific, but McMann found some kind of weird program on the phone's chip that he can't identify," Lyons went on. "No idea what it is, but it's not standard on that or any other wireless chip. At the very least, that's a security violation, possession of unlicensed and unapproved communications software of any kind inside a federal building or government department, five years in a penal factory right there. Something's going on with that girl, Mr. Vice President, and even if it's not what we fear, she's breaking the law and we need to detain her."

"How is Wallace going to react to that, Hugh?" asked Brava. "Us busting his bit of fluff on the side as maybe the spy who's caused us to lose the war, and for all we know somehow managed to put the finger on Angie Herrin and Ron Schiff for last night's Nazi hit men?"

"I have no use for Nazi bitches, but we need to think, what will that do to the president's paranoia factor?" asked Scheisskopf. "Will it make him more or less likely to push the button?"

"Unfortunately, he's pushing the button right now as we speak," Jenner reminded them.

"Is he?" asked Brava. "Maybe. But the procedure does take time. It's not a literal button; there are all kinds of procedures, checks, counterchecks, authentications, and so on to go through. He actually has to call in the codes and orders to the Strategic Defense Command, and he also has to get a return acknowledgement and a ready from the officers in charge of each missile silo cluster, who will have to confirm their targets and that kind of thing, to make sure they fire at Seattle and not at Beijing because somebody forgot to update the

computer program. We may have a little bit of time if we can impede that process."

"How much time?" asked Jenner.

"An hour, maybe," said Brava. "Perhaps more if we could distract him with this woman's possible treachery long enough for this headshrinker you called to get here. Then we let the headshrinker take over, and maybe he in turn can stall the president while you get the Speaker of the House and the President of the Senate over here, and while Al and I round up twenty field grade officers for every Jew Fein and Rabinowitz can muster, to explain to Hunter Wallace why it's a bad idea to disembowel ourselves in an act of thermonuclear hara-kiri."

"In the meantime, what can we do with Fein and Rabinowitz and Patterson in there?" asked Jenner.

"I can get on the horn to Fort Lee and get some Delta Force guys I know choppered in here who will do what I tell 'em, including arresting those two kikes and poor old Pat Patterson," offered Scheisskopf. "In the president's presence, if we have to."

"That won't be necessary, General," said Lee Lyons. "My men will detain the three officers, although I would prefer to wait until they leave the Oval Office so we don't upset the president. Jimbo Hadding would detain Jesus and gun down Mary and Joseph if I told him to do it."

"You're down with this, Lee?" asked Jenner.

"So long is the president is not harmed, yes, sir," said the Secret Service man. "It's obvious to me that President Wallace is under a great strain, he is not thinking rationally, and he is doing things that endanger himself and others. My job is to protect the president from danger, including protecting him from himself if need be. It won't be the first time the Secret Service has had to clean some dirty presidential laundry and when need be we do it efficiently and discreetly."

"Don't you think Agent Lyons here has the duty to interrupt the president even at this crucial point with serious information of this magnitude, information which directly affects the chief executive's personal security?" suggested Brava. "If I remember my White House security protocols, the Secret Service pretty much has the power to grab the wheel at any time if a threat to the president is identified? As the Halberstam woman may well be."

"He's right, sir," said Lyons.

"It will buy us some time and give us a chance to scope what the hell's going on in there," said Scheisskopf.

"Every minute he's talking to somebody, about any thing at all, is a minute he's not pushing the button," said Jenner in agreement. "All right, Lee, see what you can do . . ." Jenner looked up and saw Georgia enter the lobby, on her way out the door. "No, wait. I have a better idea."

Georgia walked calmly toward the lobby door to the West Wing, which was hidden from public view from Pennsylvania Avenue by thick hedges and shrubs. Once outside the door she would descend into the artfully concealed tunnel that ran below Executive Avenue into the underground parking garage beneath the Executive Office Building. There was a cab rank in the garage where she normally took a taxi home to her apartment, but today she would walk out of the garage and text Donald Duck to Bobby once she was clear. He would pick her up, and then would come one more rough part, the part where they would extract her daughter Allura from the Halberstams' house on K Street. Then it was out of this filthy city, back on the road, but this time going in the right direction, going Home, with Montana gleaming in the distant skies ahead of them, and the house on Daly Avenue waited for her and Allura. Georgia was wrapped up in the nearness of home as she left this place for the last time. Through the doors, she could see the warm, clipped grass of the North Lawn and hear the cars going by on Pennsylvania Avenue outside. Just a few more steps, out the door . . .

Then she felt the hand on her shoulder. She turned and saw Agent Lee Lyons. His eyes were dead now, the dead of the American secret policeman in the suit who had terrorized white people in this land for a century. Somewhere, she could not for the life of her remember where, Georgia had read something about that on the internet. White male agents' eyes were always like that when the American suits came for you. Not full of hatred, or anger, or triumph like the black or brown or female agents, glorying in the destruction of the disobedient white people they so hated. White male feds moving in for their kills had lifeless eyes, like a shark or a doll, as if they'd switched off their brains and were running on some kind of autopilot. They were robots obeying

the orders of the vast soulless machine that made them and nurtured them and owned them. In a way that was more terrifying and soul-destroying than the blows, slaps, shoves, rifle butts to the head and screamed obscenities of some bestial black or swaggering Latino trying to show his macho. Georgia saw the dead eyes of Amurrica looking at her now, and she knew. The Eater of Souls had found her, and now it was her turn.

"Come with me, please, Ms. Halberstam," said Lyons. "The Vice President of the United States wants to speak with you."

She walked calmly, determined to show no fear as she was dragged into the machine. She accompanied the Secret Serviceman into the Vice Presidential office a few short steps away from the lobby door that had meant freedom moments ago. Jenner was sitting behind his desk, looking haggard. He stood up when she entered. "Ms. Halberstam, good morning," he said in a low voice, gesturing toward a chair. "Please take a seat. I need to speak with you about a matter of some urgency."

Georgia sat down. She was thinking rapidly. She decided that it was best not to play the dumb blonde, and she was tired of that role in any case. She wouldn't confess, she would give Bobby his 24 hours, but she wouldn't play chickenshit games either. "Let me guess," she said to him. "Something is wrong with the president, and either you need to pick my brains about him, or else you want me to try and talk to him about something. Am I right?"

"You are," said Jenner with a nod. "To begin with, Ms. Halberstam, in all honesty and fairness, I need to tell you that Agent Lyons here has some questions about some of your outgoing phone calls and texts. But that is not why I wanted to speak to you. We need your immediate help on another matter. If we can resolve that satisfactorily, then the Secret Service will deal with the issue of your phone usage later."

"Sir?" said Lyons, astounded.

"Later," repeated Jenner flatly. "Possibly next week some time. Do you understand what I am saying to you, Ms. Halberstam?"

"I understand," said Georgia with a nod.

Jenner continued. "The second thing I want to do is to apologize if during the past few months I have inadvertently said or done anything

that might have seemed to you to indicate any, ah, disdain or disregard on my part. You see, we need your help very badly indeed."

"So it would seem," said Georgia with a smile. "You never said anything or did anything nasty to me, no sir. No needling little remarks or smirks behind my back, like some. You just looked through me like I wasn't there, like most of the players around here did."

"That must have been very useful, to be invisible," said Lee Lyons, scowling at her.

"Sometimes," she said with a glance at him.

"The president is about to launch a full nuclear missile strike against the Northwest Republic," said Jenner. "He is in the Oval Office right now, with some military officers who we have reason to believe will do nothing to dissuade him, and who will actually encourage him. He will not listen to anyone, not to me, not to senior military men who believe as I do that such an act will be a catastrophe from which the United States will never recover, and which may well lead to the destruction of what is left of this country."

"You want to stop him?" asked Georgia. "I thought you were from Oregon and you wanted to destroy the Republic?"

"I am an Oregonian by birth, yes, but I am an American first," said Jenner. "That is where I differ from—well, from the people running things in Oregon now. I suppose in a way that's what it was all about, all that bloodshed and horror back then. Some of us wanted to give up on America, some of us didn't. I didn't."

"I think if you were to ask them, sir, they would say it was because they wanted to secure the existence of their people and a future for white children," said Georgia. "At least, I remember hearing that phrase at the time. What, exactly, do you want me to do?"

"Talk him out of it," said Jenner. "I understand that you still have family living in the Northwest, and so I will assume for that reason, if for no other, that you have a strong motivation to prevent an atomic attack on them. It is possible that Hunter Wallace will listen to you when he will listen to no one else, because of your, ah, personal relationship."

"Relationship?" said Georgia with a bitter laugh. "Is that what it is? I'm sorry, Mr. Vice President, please go on."

"If you can't talk him out of it, at least buy us some time," said Jenner. "We have someone else on his way who may be able to step in and give you a hand in keeping his finger off the button, although it isn't actually a button, it's a series of commands he has to give to the units of the Strategic Defense Command. Appeal to his better nature, if you think he has one. Do, well, whatever you have to do in order to distract him from the contents if that briefcase." The Vice President was clearly uncomfortable with the topic.

"You mean an impending nuclear holocaust might get him so horny he'll want to break for a quickie?" she said with a merry laugh. Then she stopped laughing. "I'll do what I can. When? Now?"

"We need to get those three officers out of the Oval Office somehow," said Jenner. "Then we'll send you in. He's locked the door, but Agent Lyons has a master pass card."

Lyons spoke up. "Sir, with all due respect—you want me to let *her* in to be alone with the president? At a time like this? Have you lost your fucking *mind?*"

"No, but Hunter Wallace has," said Jenner seriously. "Lee, have you ever seen any of those old photographs from Hiroshima and Nagasaki, pictures of the people who survived the atomic blast itself? Never mind the Northmen. I know you were a FATPO, and you fought them, and you don't care about them, but we have hundreds of thousands of American soldiers and Marines within the heavy fallout range of major target areas, not to mention over a dozen major cities in the United States and Canada and millions of people in smaller American and Canadian cities and towns. Men, women, children, do you want them to die from the radioactive isotopes tearing their hearts and lungs to pieces and their burned flesh falling off their bones while they're still alive? All because a little tribe of Oriental parasites can't stand to lose their wealth and their power and their egomaniacal self-image as God's own butt buddies? What is about to happen is inhuman, and we have to try everything to stop it."

Lyons' phone rang. He flipped it open and listened. "All right, Sanchez. Wait until they get downstairs, detain them and take them to the holding cells. No, I didn't say arrest them, I just said grab 'em and throw 'em in the can. We'll sort it out later. We have to keep them

away from the president." He closed his phone. "Those three Pentagon visitors got hungry and left the Oval Office for the mess downstairs, looking for breakfast. My guys are on them. The president is alone."

"Volunteer luck," said Georgia to herself with a rueful smile.

"What?" said Lyons. "Where the hell did you hear that expression?"

"Another phrase I seem to recall from my dim past," said Georgia. "Well? Do you want me to give it a shot?"

"Why should we trust you?" demanded Lyons.

"Logically, I suppose you shouldn't," she replied coolly, looking up at the Secret Serviceman's glaring face. "But you're right, Mr. Vice President. I don't want Hunter Wallace exploding nuclear weapons in the Northwest Republic, and I will do what I can to prevent that. Do my reasons really matter?"

"No," said Jenner. "Just try to buy us some time. When this other person gets here we'll find some way to bring him in." Georgia rose from her seat.

"Sir, I don't think this is a good idea!" protested Lyons.

"Give me your master key card, in case he's locked himself in again," said Jenner. "I'll do it. The responsibility will be mine. Otherwise we'll have to knock on the door and try to talk her in, and that may waste time we don't have." Wordlessly Lyons took the electronic card from his pocket and handed it over to the Vice President. She followed him through the Roosevelt room to the door of the Oval Office; the huge negro agent Jimbo Hadding was behind the security desk and he glared at her, but in the absence of any orders to the contrary he let them pass. Jenner took the key card from his pocket and held it up to the lock. "Good luck, Ms. Halberstam," he said.

She looked at him. "Marvin Halberstam is the creep who married my mother. For the record, my name is Georgia Myers."

"I'll remember that," said the Vice President. He swiped the key card and the door to the Oval Office clicked open. Georgia went in and closed it behind her.

Hunter Wallace was sitting behind the great mahogany presidential desk, the metal briefcase open before him. Papers were spread out on the desk in front of him, and he was holding several in his hand and

reading some numbers off the page. "SDC Wichita, confirm command three niner four five alpha, check words Disco Duck. Confirm targets Eugene and Corvallis, Newport naval facility." Wallace looked up. "Hi, Georgie!" he said like an excited child.

"Hunter, stop!" she said. "You can't do this!"

"Sure I can!" he giggled. "I'm the president! I can do anything I want now! They're going to be sorry now. Sorry they went against the Apple of God's eye! Sorry they laughed at me and refused to recognize my genius back in those days when I offered myself to be their leader, but they chose that fat old fool instead, even though they all secretly knew I was better and smarter. Now they're going to pay. All of them. They refused to give me what was mine, and now they're going to burn. My friends aren't dead, you know," he said, leaning forward, speaking in a conspiratorial whisper. "They're here. Angela and Ron. Hugh Jenner and those cowardly generals had them murdered last night, but they're still here! I can hear their voices whispering to me right now, telling me what to do! I'm going to kill Hugh Jenner, too. Yes, SDC Omaha, this is the President of the United States speaking. Initiate Operation Apocalypse. Yes, that is correct. No, this is not a drill. Confirm command seven one seven niner epsilon, check words Hee Haw. Confirm targets Kalispell, Whitefish military engineering center, University of Montana at Missoula." He looked up at Georgia. "You do want me to drop a couple of extra hot shots on Missoula for you, dear, and make sure we fry that racist old man of yours to a real crispy critter?"

In one instantaneous flash of cosmic consciousness, Georgia understood. This man was hopelessly insane, beyond all reason, and he was in the process of destroying her childhood and her blood right before her eyes. She knew what had to be done, she understood the price, and she accepted it. There seemed to be no conscious thought involved.

Hunter Wallace had an archaic personal eccentricity: instead of using a word processing or PowerPoint program, he was in the habit of correcting his speeches and making notations on hard copy documents with a large number two blue pencil. A number of these stood in a small wire canister on his desk, all of them daily sharpened to a needle-like

point by his anal lesbian PA, Wanda Jankowski. Georgia picked up one of the pencils, leaned over the desk, and with all her strength rammed the point through Hunter Wallace's left eye deep into his brain.

The president did not die immediately. He jumped up and screamed like an animal in mortal agony, blood spurting from his exploded eyeball in a fountain that soaked Georgia's yellow blouse and leather skirt, and then he turned and ran headlong into the wall at full speed. He fell to the floor, flopped and writhing, vomiting, screaming again and again like a soul burning in hell, pissing himself and shitting in his pants. Then he quivered and died. The lich lay on the carpet, oozing blood and bodily fluids onto the great woven Presidential seal in the rug that had featured in so many movies.

There was a crash behind her as the door to the Oval Office was kicked almost off its hinges. Georgia turned and saw the huge black Secret Serviceman, Jimbo Hadding, standing in the doorway, his pistol leveled at her with both hands. He took one look at what had happened. *"Bitch!"* he screamed, spittle flying from his thick bubble lips.

"Nigger!" Georgia said, for the first and only time in her life. Then the bullets slammed into her.

XX

Killing The Right People

(July Fourth)

The trouble with modern war is that it gives no one a chance to kill the right people.

—Ezra Pound

On the morning of July Fourth, as the sun rose in the mountains far to the east of the Oregon shore, a coastal defense patrol found something on Sunset Beach just south of Astoria. Lying on the sand at a thirty-degree portside list, where it had been washed up onto the beach by the tide was the wreck of a Kriegsmarine Torpedo Assault Craft, TAC-109, its nylon Tricolor naval ensign on the stern yard blowing and crackling in the wind. The rear deck had been blown open where the methane fuel tank had ruptured, the twin fifty-caliber machine guns drooped downward, and the whole superstructure was riddled with holes from chain guns, twenty-millimeter guns and general automatic weapons fire sustained during the Battle of the Columbia Bar two weeks before. The vessel had been drifting for all that time, and amazingly had stayed afloat until it reached land. There was no sign of the TAC boat's crew, although the rubber life raft and emergency gear were gone. No trace of Lieutenant Ken Rogers, Mate Holger Stromberg, or Able Seamen Ralph Hornaday and James McAdams was ever found. In this case, the sea chose not to give up its dead.

The patrol was joined by some local people from Seaside and Astoria. After ascertaining that there were no signs of life on board, they got a large tow truck and with steel cables, a winch, and a lot of muscle

they dragged the shattered vessel up higher onto the beach, about two hundred yards from a larger, rusting hulk. This was the wreck of the former Catalina Island car ferry *S.S. Ventura,* which had remained where it ran aground in the battle of Sunset Beach many years before, during the War of Independence. The Federal Anti-Terrorist Police Organization (FATPO) had attempted a seaborne invasion of Clatsop County, Oregon, with a view to surprising Zack Hatfield's Third Battalion of the NVA Portland Brigade, as it was then designated. The federals had been met by the NVA on the beach and bloodily repulsed. [See *The Brigade*,]

The burned-out remains of the *Ventura* had been left on the beach. Later on, after some consideration, the Republic decided to leave the shot-up wreck of TAC-109 there as well, mounted on a bed of concrete to make sure it didn't wash away in a winter storm. To this, they added the originally scuttled and sunken but later salvaged wreck of the motor launch *Nancy*, which during the War of Independence had been converted to a crude torpedo boat and used during the NVA's assault on the original aircraft carrier *John F. Kennedy,* docked at Bremerton. This strip of coastline is today the Sunset Beach National Monument, and the Republic's official naval war memorial, with a museum attached a little ways inland. The site attracts tens of thousands of tourists each year. Every June 30th, on the anniversary of the abortive FATPO invasion, the graduating class of the Naval Academy takes their final oath of allegiance to the Republic on the sand in front of the three burned and bullet-scarred wrecks on the beach.

* * *

Toward dawn, Bob Campbell briefly fell asleep in his chair in the Renwick Gallery garret, but he awoke about half past six to the sound of sirens and the sight of unusual vehicular activity on the White House grounds, or what he could see of them from his restricted vantage point. With his binoculars, he spotted at least one ambulance and a whole line of official black government limousines and law enforcement SUVs with red and blue LED lights flashing, entering the grounds via the wrought-iron gates on Executive Avenue. The sun was not yet up, but

the sky was dull and brassy, and it promised fair to be another steam bath of an east coast summer's day.

Something must have gone wrong, Bob thought in alarm. He flipped open his phone and checked CNN, but there was no breaking news, just the usual re-runs of talking heads from the night before, experts in suits and retired generals going on about how the gallant American champions of freedom and democracy were holding strong and destroying the evil forces of racist Northwest tyranny through a brilliant strategy of "defense in depth," which was the official terminology for being surrounded by the NDF. Bob surveyed the scene out the window again. He couldn't see enough of the White House through the intervening trees and concrete to figure out what was going on, and decided he had to risk a clear call to Cardinale, although he would be very circumscribed in the language he would be able to use. Bob opened his phone, dialed, heard Vinnie Skins answer, and ad-libbed in his Chicago Richie persona. "Hey, boss, it's me. That pickup for this morning is looking a little shaky. Looks like our guy was partying all night or something. Anyway, his crib is really jumping with some pretty dubious characters, know what I mean? I dunno where the merchandise is or what kind of shape it's in."

"I do, unfortunately," said Cardinale, opening the door of the small storeroom and stepping inside, phone in hand. Betsy came in after him. She was dressed for travel in jeans, runners, and a blue denim blouse.

Bob jumped up. "What's happening?"

"Guess who got woken up this morning by the Secret Service to make an emergency house call at sixteen hundred Pennsylvania Avenue?" said Betsy. "Our own Zombie Master. They sent a limo for him. Seems the main man himself was losing his marbles, just like Belladonna said."

"What?" exclaimed Bob. "You're shitting me!"

"Nope, nary turd one," said Cardinale. "The Zombie Master's over there now, inside the building. They've locked him down in the kitchen, not just him but the rest of the staff as well, apparently, while the politicals figure out what to do with this incredible mess they're going to have to spin to the public for the Fourth of July."

"What the hell is going on?" asked Bob. "Do you know?"

"Yeah, kind of," replied Vinnie. "Doc Shapira and I have a little more advanced verbal code than we had time to teach you, and sometimes we can conduct an almost open phone conversation for short periods of time. On certain subjects, anyway."

"Is Georgia all right?" demanded Bob.

Cardinale looked at him. "Son, there's no easy way to tell you this, so I'm just going to spit it out. She's dead. So is the President of the United States. Our Beautiful Lady lived up to her other name as well; she turned out to be deadly. She killed the president, and the Secret Service killed her."

Bob felt the floor move beneath him, and he collapsed back into the chair. *"Mother of God!"* he moaned. "How the hell did that happen? She wasn't supposed to kill him, that wasn't the plan! I don't get it. I would have sworn she didn't have it in her, that Georgia was never dangerous to anybody but herself!"

"Everybody has it in them," said Betsy.

"*How?* How did she do it? What in God's name went wrong?"

"You remember you passed on that last message of hers about six this morning, right?" said Cardinale. "The one where she said we'd broke his brain? It looks like she was speaking literally. Hunter Wallace flipped his lid. That's why they called Doc over, to try and give the presidential noggin a quick tune-up, but Shapira never even got to see him. Without his two Jewish advisors, Wallace went into kosher withdrawal or whatever the fuck happens to *shabazz goyim* who can't get their daily kike fix. He got hold of the nuclear codes, and he was about to launch a full nuclear missile strike against the Northwest Republic. Somehow, our lady got to him and stopped him. She stabbed him with a letter opener or something, as near as Doc can figure, and then the bodyguards gunned her down. Hugh Jenner is now president, and apparently he has called off the nuclear attack on the Republic."

"She did it," said Bob in a dull voice. "She saved us."

"She did," said Cardinale grimly. "This is bad news, Rich, the worst news possible, but I'm going to need you focused with your head in the game now. That young woman literally saved our country from being fried into a cinder. We made her a promise, a promise we can't keep now, at least not half of it, but by God, son, we're going to keep the

other half! I need you and Betsy to go and extract the little girl from that palace of filth on K Street and do the whole E&E just like we planned, only just with the child, not the mother. *Capiche?*"

"Yes, sir," said Campbell, standing up, his heart like lead inside him. "What about you?"

"Duke and I will pick up the Doc as soon as he can get clear of the White House," Cardinale told him. "Then we have something we need to take care of. We had a contingency plan if Operation Belladonna went south. The pissed-off mood I'm in right now, I say fuck it, let's see if we can go for the record, two presidents in one day. Never mind that. You and that little girl need to be long out of the city by then. After today I'm shutting the whole Vinnie Skins operation down, and we're all going to ground until we can figure out how bad the heat is going to get. They're going to tear Georgia's life apart second by every second she was in the White House. Eventually they'll find you, and they'll make the connection with that dead Secret Serviceman Duke Dear-Johned in the alley, then it all starts to unravel. We've got a procedure in place whereby we all go completely under and keep on fighting. If it comes down to it we have some packages stashed away to deliver in the Washington, D.C. area that will pretty much bring this whole sick toilet of a city to a stop. I really hope we get those orders. Now you and Betsy need to get rolling. The Halberstam residence is going to be crawling with wall to wall goons once they catch their breath and start the wheels of investigation and retaliation going."

"Got it, sir," said Campbell.

"If all goes well, we won't be seeing each other again," said Cardinale, sticking out his hand. "It's been a pleasure, kid. Sorry about the result, but there's never any guarantees."

"It's been a privilege for me, sir," said Campbell, shaking his hand. "The result was the one we wanted, it's just the price was higher than we thought." He nodded to Betsy. "Let's go."

Cardinale was right: the Secret Service was already on the move, beginning the official investigation into the late president's death. Bob and Betsy were lucky there were only two agents on the doorstep when they arrived at the sumptuous K Street brownstone of Marvin and Amber Halberstam. It was still very early in the morning, not even 7

a.m. Two suited agents, one black male and one woman who was some kind of off-coffee color, were standing in the portico arguing with a small dark-skinned woman in a gray dress and apron. This was either a maid or Allura's nanny. The federals were apparently demanding entry. The café-au-lait female in her Power Womyn suit was arguing with the maid or nanny in Tagalog. Bob checked them out over the neatly manicured hedge. "We'd better move fast; there will probably be more of them along to search the house any minute now."

Bob and Betsy took the direct approach: they marched up the flagstoned walk and as the two Secret Service agents turned, they both raised their silenced weapons in unison, and each of them drilled one of the goons through the head. The guns spat and the feds collapsed onto the portico in an Armani heap. The brown woman disappeared into the house screaming, and they followed her, stepping over the corpses. "Upstairs nursery!" he yelled to Betsy. "I'll clear the downstairs!" She leaped up the stairs three at a time.

Bob slipped through the luxurious and plushly carpeted downstairs rooms, his gun at the ready. He found Amber Halberstam sprawled on an antique brocade sofa in the den, richly dressed in an evening gown and almost comatose. Apparently, she had been out all night at some kind of formal function, and never bothered to go to bed once she staggered in.

Bob was shocked at the way Amber had deteriorated from her days in Montana. He remembered a vigorous if obnoxious woman in her prime, healthy and strapping in a hairy-legged Earth Mother kind of way. The creature dripping off the couch in front of him was a desiccated hag with hollow, haunted eyes, blue varicose veins in her legs and quivering, wrinkled hands. *My God, after only twelve years at the top of the shitheap?* he thought to himself. *I guess the liberal life takes its toll.*

Amber stared up at him blearily, no recognition in her eyes. It was obvious that she was either stoned out of her mind, blind drunk, or both. A priceless hundred-year-old Waterford crystal decanter stood on the side table at the end of the sofa, almost empty of some golden liquid, either whiskey or brandy, and a smeared empty highball glass sat next to it. "Good morning, Mrs. Myers," he said. "I don't suppose you would

remember me, but I used to hang around at your house a lot with your son, Kevin. I'm Bobby Campbell from back in Missoula."

"Bobby?" she burbled, screwing up her eyes and her forehead, trying to remember. "Oh, yeah, Bobby Campbell from down the street. Jenny's brother. She was a fucking racist merfer, murderfer, murferder. Uh . . . no, you can't be here . . ."

"Is your husband at home this morning?" he asked politely.

"Marvin's spending the night with his girl friend," said Amber. "We gotta kinda open marriage, you know. Real fucking civilized."

"Of course you do."

"You can't be here," she said, struggling to sit up as it finally percolated into her pickled brain that no way should that little racist hooligan, Bobby Campbell from Missoula, be here in her house on K Street, and something was going on.

"I promised Georgia I wouldn't hurt you," said Bob. "I lied." He shot her once dead center between her sagging breasts, leaned over and forced the silencer between her teeth, and blew the back of her head off, splattering the exquisite Louis Quinze wallpaper behind the sofa with blood and brains and skull fragments.

Betsy appeared in the doorway. In her arms, she held a small blue-eyed blonde girl about fourteen months of age, wearing only a disposable diaper and clasping an old-fashioned Raggedy Ann doll. She had a pacifier in her mouth and stared around at the world, taking it all in but not crying or afraid. "The nanny?" asked Bob.

Betsy drew her finger across her throat with a "*Ffffft!* We need to roll, Richie. I'll get her dressed in the car." With Georgia's help, they had long ago put together a travel bag for Allura in case of sudden need. It included several suits of clothes, more diapers and changing gear, bottles and baby food, a few toys, and so on. The back of Bob's car had also been fitted with a child seat.

As they left the house, stepping over the two Secret Service corpses again, Bob looked up and saw the closed-circuit television camera hanging on its bracket over the door. "Damn!" he cursed. "Now they've got us on video downtown, coming and going!"

"Shit happens," said Betsy.

On the way out of town, Betsy rode in the back seat, dressing Allura in a light cotton pants suit and strapping her into the child seat. The child simply sucked on the pacifier, hugged her Raggedy Ann and stared out the window watching things go by, barely making a sound beyond occasional squeaks and gurbles. Bob didn't dare try to get back into Virginia over any of the bridges, in view of the virtually certain Code Red security alert the city was on, even though the assassination of Hunter Wallace hadn't been publicly announced yet. The bridges wouldn't be shut down, since that would screw up the whole grid beyond measure and make search and control in a city paralyzed by traffic jams infinitely harder for the authorities. But on that stage of alert, every license number and FLEC ID and VIN number of every person and vehicle leaving the District would be automatically run through the DHS computer network, and he couldn't risk anything tripping an alarm somewhere in the system. For all he knew they now had an alert out for the car.

Bob got onto Canal Road and drove westward, through Georgetown, and then onto the Clara Barton Parkway. He was going to have to risk going through one of the many unauthorized entrances and exits to the ESMA used by buttleggers, beefleggers, and other criminals or individuals who, for whatever reason, did not find it convenient to go through an established checkpoint with its surveillance gear and database cross-referencing. Bob got off Clara Barton at Manning Road, and slid through the streets running parallel to Macarthur Road, until he came to Capital Crescent Trail. He pulled over into a filling station right by the border wall that sold expensive gasoline as well as ethanol and charge-ups for electric vehicles; the day manager was a customer of his who had a sideline. "Hey, Joey," said Richie.

"Hey, Rich," said the pump jockey, a middle-aged man with several days' stubble and the lean build of the true tobacco addict. "Wasn't expecting you until tomorrow." Joey ran through three cartons of Chinese Camel knockoffs a week.

"Actually, I need a favor, Joe," said Richie. "I need to get over to Bethesda real quick to do some business, and I don't have time to fight the traffic at the checkpoints. I was hoping you'd put your magic finger on your magic button and let me slip out the back." This was pure

bullshit; the only thing in Bethesda was violent niggers. Joey looked in the back and saw Betsy and the child.

"You sure about that, Rich?" he asked. "The sun may be up here, but Maryland is still kind of dark this time of day." Joey wasn't just being coy or silly; long practice with living under draconian hatespeech laws made white Americans reflexively fall back on code words and circumlocutions any time a conversation even came within shouting distance of race. It was a survival mechanism; between the FBI and the unofficial Brotherhood Volunteers who sniffed out racial dissidents for the FBI and DHS (mostly white women married to black and Third World men), no one ever knew who was wired or when a casual remark would mean a nickel in one of the penal factories, mines, or oil refineries along the hellish American Texas coast. The factories were hungry for labor; America's black and brown minorities were now too privileged to work with their hands or their backs much, so every year the hate laws got worse.

"Business is business. What can I tell you?" said Richie/Bob, leaning his hand on the open window frame of the car, a couple of thousand-dollar bills grasped loosely between his fingers. Joey looked at the money and made it disappear.

"Well, if you're sure you know what you're doing, drive on around." Bob swung the car around back of the filling station. A minute later, a concealed electric engine groaned, and a section of the corrugated steel security wall began to move aside. Bob drove through the wall into Maryland. The illegal gate rumbled closed behind him.

Black Maryland was as bad as Bob had been told. The streets were piled high with ancient garbage and cratered with potholes that forced him to drive slowly, dangerously slowly, because it meant that niggers on foot could get at them. None of the traffic lights worked; driving through the streets of Bethesda was like threading an obstacle course. Bob had to avoid the huge holes in the asphalt, since a breakdown or broken axle pretty clearly meant death. Fortunately for them it was still very early in the morning, and few of the local denizens were out and about. Bob could see groups of black figures loping through the alleys and the intersections, some apparently foraging, eyeing the car sullenly with hate in their eyes and snarls on their thick bubble lips. Several

times sniper shots whined in and cracked the bulletproof glass on the windshield and the rear window.

They were finally attacked in Silver Spring by a mob of about thirty blacks of all ages and sexes who swarmed out of nearby alleys and overran the car, as Bob slowed to avoid a pothole the size of a tank trap. They hammered on the car with clubs and lumps of concrete and started rocking it, trying to overturn it. Betsy cracked a window and fired out, killing several of the animals. The rest ran away. In Rockville they ran into a crude barricade made of old furniture and boxes manned, if that was the word, by shaven-headed monkoids, presumably some local gang. Bob smashed through the roadblock and drove on. They eventually made it out into the wasted countryside, green with summer but eerily deserted now. They drove past fire-gutted houses and old strip malls, mostly rubble now, that stood silently in the muggy heat and whirring crickets.

Frederick was a fortified white enclave with police blockhouses at key intersections and points along the road. From there Bob was able to get up onto Interstate 70, which was passably maintained and drivable, so they made better time. Around two they halted at a truck stop in Hagerstown surrounded by Bremer walls and barbed wire, guarded by armed white men wearing some kind of private security uniforms. They were able to get some food and gas, albeit at exorbitant prices charged by the Hindus who ran the place. Bob glanced at the TV over the bar in the restaurant. Apparently, there still had been no official announcement that the President of the United States was dead and the regime's hold over the state-controlled media was still sufficiently powerful to stifle even rumors.

At Hagerstown Betsy changed Allura, fed her a jar of strained plums, made her a bottle of juice, and secured the little girl in her seat. She had cried a couple of times on the way up, but now she fell peacefully asleep in the child seat, clutching the bottle and the Raggedy Ann, one in each hand. Betsy was now riding in the front as they headed down 80 to Martinsburg, West Virginia. "You know you're compromised now," Bob told her. "They surely recorded us on the cameras whacking those two federals."

"Yeah, well, I was getting tired of D.C. anyway," said Betsy with a shrug. "The Office will find me a new gig. Maybe New York or Chicago or American Houston."

"I've got a better idea," said Bob. "We're not out of the woods yet, and that little girl is going to need caring for by someone while I do the driving and take care of all the details of getting us Home. It's a two-man job. Why not come all the way Home with the both of us, Bets? I gather you're not actually in the WPB; you're a civilian employee, so to speak, so you're not under military discipline and you can take some time off. You've been fighting for the Republic all your life, comrade. Why not Come Home and see what you've been fighting for? You've earned it."

"Not the way it works," replied Betsy. "I don't get happy endings."

"Never know until you try," said Bob.

"I guess somebody told you about me," said Betsy, without rancor. "If they told it right, then you know I have nothing to go back to."

"Nothing from your past, no," agreed Bob. "But you've got the rest of your life to go to. Look, I won't push it. But the Party and the NVA made the Northwest Republic so white people wouldn't have to live in this kind of shit all their lives, never again. That includes you. I get it if you don't want to go back to Washington, but my part of Montana is pretty cool. Just think about it, okay?"

"Okay, I will," said Betsy. She pulled out her phone and turned up CNN. "I guess Hugh Jenner's going to be making that Fourth of July speech instead of the late President Wallace," she said. "It's set for two p.m. I'll turn it up so you can hear it."

"This should be interesting," chuckled Bob.

"Oh, yeah," said Betsy with a giggle. "It will go over with a bang."

* * *

At that moment, Vinnie Skins and Duke were pulling a medium-sized flatbed truck loaded with what appeared to be six lengths of 14-inch black iron pipe lying side by side into an alley behind the Café

Soleil, just off 17th Street. Duke parked very carefully, right on a red line that had been spray-painted across the alleyway the night before. "I sure hope Birdie's computer knows what the hell it's doing," said Duke. "I know he vows and swears this is the right firing position and the right range, but this thing has no sighting on it besides the hoist. How the hell do we know where the hell these rounds are going to hit?"

"That's half the fun," said Cardinale with a laugh. "You never popped the top on one of these babies back in the day, but I did, four or five times. There just isn't any way to make them pinpoint accurate, hence the six barrels. But believe me, even if we don't cack Jenner, we will definitely steal his thunder as he announces to a bereaved nation the death of their beloved leader. God, I hope the camera shows his face when the roof caves in on his ass!"

"If we even manage to hit the roof of the White House," said Duke pessimistically.

"Hey, if not, maybe we'll overshoot and bring down the Washington Monument!" said Cardinale in a jovial voice. "Got your E & E memorized?"

"Sure," said Duke. "After we pop the top, I leg it over past Farragut Square to the metro station where Tricia picks me up, you head for your rendezvous with June Bug at Burrito Brothers. Needless to say, if Birdie can't pull down the cameras we're both going to have pretty short trips."

"Even if he can't, we fire anyway," said Cardinale firmly. "If that happens, we abort the pickups and we bop our way out as best we can. Our chances won't be good, but at least we won't take Tricia and June Bug down with us."

"Roger that, sir," replied Fitzpatrick.

"If I don't make it and you do, Duke, you're in charge," Cardinale reminded him. "You know the order codes for the phosgene and the anthrax? Can you pop the top on them if you're ordered to do so?"

"Me get a chance to clean out this cesspool once and for all?" Duke responded. "No problem at all, sir."

Inside the Oval Office, the Acting President Hugh Jenner was seated behind the famous desk with the Rose Garden visible through the French windows behind him, the setting for so many famous

presidential addresses in the past. Hunter Wallace's blood and bodily fluids had been scoured from the floor and the well-known carpet with the presidential seal had been removed for cleaning; the whole room still smelled of disinfectant. The White House media staff were busily setting up the camera and the teleprompter in front of the desk for him when Agent Lee Lyons came into the room. "Guys, could you give us a minute?" he asked the technicians. After they left, he said, "Mr. President, I can confirm the two agents killed at the Halberstam home, as well as Mrs. Halberstam, the mother, and a Filipino nanny. Illegal of course, not that that matters much anymore since the effective suspension of all immigration law in this country a generation ago. All the decedents were shot to death with nine-millimeter rounds. Allura Halberstam is missing and has been kidnapped by the two assailants captured on the security cams, who were recorded leaving and carrying the child with them. These have both been identified from the video footage from their FLEC cards, using facial recognition software. Oddly enough, this doesn't seem to be spies, it looks like a mob thing. One of the gunners is named Richard Carroll, a low-level soldier in Vincent Cardinale's butt-and-beeflegging crew over in Arlington. A lot of White House staff use Vinnie Skins, and so there may be all kinds of connections there. The other one is Elizabeth Parris, a registered sex trade worker and also a street captain for Cardinale."

"The Nazis are hiring the mob to do their dirty work now?" asked Jenner, puzzled. "That doesn't sound like them. I thought they were a lot more professional than that."

"Maybe Carroll and Parris were subcontracting for somebody in the Circus," suggested Lyons.

"Well, something weird is going on here," said Jenner.

"I'm running enhanced checks on Carroll and Parris," said Lyons. "We know the WPB has the capability of creating synthetics, people with fully verifiable cyber-IDs. They break into our databases like they were high school lockers and put whatever crap they want in there." Lyons leaned over the desk and lowered his voice. "Sir, I have to ask—this morning, did you know she would do it when you let her into this office?"

"No, of course not," said Jenner, shaking his head emphatically. "I hoped that she would dissuade the president through persuasion on a personal or yes, possibly sexual level."

"That's your story and you're sticking to it?" said Lyons dryly. "You're saying it never occurred to you that anyone Northwest intelligence was able to infiltrate this close to the center of government would very likely be not only a highly trained professional assassin quite capable of killing with anything that came to hand, but a Nazi fanatic perfectly willing to give up her own life in order to carry out her mission?"

"I do not recall any thoughts of the kind crossing my mind, no," said Jenner. "And yes, that's my story and I'm sticking to it. May I suggest, Lee, that in view of the fact that we are in the middle of a severe national crisis, not to mention the fact that your career is on the line even more so than mine, we agree to pull together on this one and put together a narrative that makes some kind of sense, or can at least be spun to look like it makes sense? As deep in the shit as we find ourselves this afternoon, at least there are no mushroom clouds going up over Vancouver or poisoning American cities. Now we have a martyred president whom we can get almost endless mileage out of, if we play this right. I see no need for posterity ever to know that he was as crazy as a fucking loon!"

"And will the Northmen play along with your spin, sir?" asked Lyons skeptically.

"I don't know," said Jenner. "That's one reason we need to start talking to them." He pulled out a piece of paper from the desk. "I sent this to the Russian Embassy earlier, on the assumption that the Russkis are keeping in touch with their clients in the Northwest and that they would have some way to e-mail or fax it to Ray Ridgeway in Olympia. He's their Finance Minister now in the NAR, and he's an old acquaintance of mine from Portland—well, an old enemy, if you want to know the truth. Before the Trouble we spent most of our time trying to ruin each other, bankrupt each other, hijack one another's companies through hostile takeovers, seduce each other's wives, that kind of yuppie crap."

"Why, sir?" asked Lyons. "What was the beef?"

"Mostly just boredom, the kind of bored you get when you've got all the money you'll ever need and all the good things in life money can buy, so you just stir shit for the hell of it," recalled Jenner with a sigh. "This ought to get him. I signify my willingness to eat crow, and if he makes it personal maybe I can get those troops out of there alive so we'll have some intact military left, and then we can start with the delays and the soft soap and get some kind of livable armistice, until next time." Lyons looked at the message.

Dear Ray:

Hunter Wallace is dead, which I assume you know because your people sent the assassin. I'm president now, and I want to open negotiations to end this. I'm hollering uncle, Ray. I'm offering an immediate ceasefire and immediate withdrawal. You did it. You finally beat me, beat us. Savor your victory and let's stop the dying. I'll meet with your man Morehouse where and when you say.

—Hugh

Before Lyons could comment, he got a buzz on his phone, which he answered. "The Chief Justice is here," he told Jenner. The plan was to have the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court administer the oath of office to Jenner on nationwide television.

"Great," said the soon-to-be president. "I'll want a few words with him before air time, and we need to get the Cabinet in as well. Lee, we'll talk about this more later on, but right at the moment we are deep in a hole and it's time we stopped digging."

Out in the truck behind the Café Soleil, it was getting as hot as an oven in the hundred-degree July heat. Cardinale turned on the engine and the air conditioning in the cab. "We're going to need the engine to raise the mortar tubes," he said. "Might as well cool off a bit while we wait."

Duke was monitoring CNN on his phone. "Here it comes," he said. "Holy Christ, look at this!" He showed the small screen to Cardinale, pointing. "It looks like they've got the entire Cabinet standing behind him!"

"Show of solidarity with the new leader, that kind of crap," said Cardinale. "I'll bet at least half of them think Jenner whacked Hunter Wallace himself, for his own ambition."

"There's that bull dyke Chalupiak who wanted to nuke us just as much as those two Jews did, and I think that's the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court standing to Jenner's right there!" said Duke.

"Oh, yeah, he'll be there to swear the new guy in," said Cardinale. "Taking that fat jackass out will be almost as much of a plus as cacking Jenner and Chalupiak." Cardinale picked up his phone and sent an encrypted text to Birdie, who had been relocated out of his ancestral home and was now ensconced in a WPB safe house in McLean, Virginia, with his most essential equipment he'd brought with him from the old place. The text read, "Everything set here. Go." Byrd began tapping out a series of computer commands bounced off a hundred different proxy servers and bogus IP addresses. Taking down the entire District of Columbia ESMA system at once was the most complicated hack he had ever attempted, and it would take a little bit of time.

Jenner sat behind the desk wearing a neat suit with a black mourning armband. He intended to look solemn and dignified; instead, he looked like a combination between Ichabod Crane and a basset hound. The acting president began his speech. "My fellow Americans, I'm afraid that on this anniversary of our country's birth, an occasion which should be one of pride and celebration for all Americans, I must come to you with sad and shocking news. The first thing that you will notice is that I am not the man who was scheduled to make this address. The man who should be here speaking to you this afternoon is President Hunter Wallace, and he should be delivering to a waiting world the joyful and historic news that our country has once more been reunified, and the demons of racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, homophobia, and hatred have been banished from our land for all time. But this cannot be. This morning, in this very historic Oval Office from which I now speak, Hunter Wallace, a great American and a great president under whom I was proud to serve, was . . ."

Cardinale's phone bleeped and he held it up. "Okay, that's Birdie. Every street cam in the city just went down. Time to rock and roll." He leaned over and pulled a lever in the cab, a heavy electric motor

hummed and whirred, and the flatbed of the truck began to lift up from the chassis, raising the six lengthy iron pipes to a pre-set angle. Cardinale reached under his seat and turned on a timed detonator device. "Okay, we need to un-ass this vehicle now. When those mortars hit forty-eight degrees the firing sequence will start, and then we've got about thirty seconds to get out of Dodge, because when they fire the whole truck will be demolished."

"Good thing nobody's around," said Duke as they moved swiftly down the alleyway, which was deserted in the baking heat. "They must all be inside watching the speech on TV."

"Good," chuckled Vinnie Skins. "They'll get a fucking eyeful."

"How long after the mortars fire before the rounds hit?" asked Duke.

"Maybe twenty seconds, which is a bit of a weak link in the plan, I know," admitted Cardinale. "Twenty seconds in the air is enough for somebody with some cop-on over there to hear the blast, figure out what's going on, and react. Thing is that you're dealing with physics and gravity, and those can't be tweaked. They may hear the truck blow and they may even realize what the fuck it is, if they've got anybody over there who remembers the old days in Tacoma and Spokane, but once they're fired they can't stop those bombs. What goes up must come down. Let's just hope that out of six shells loaded with SuperSem and white phosphorus, we can ram at least one of them up Hugh Jenner's ass."

Secret Service SAIC Lee Lyons was a former FATPO, and he did indeed remember the old days in Tacoma and Spokane. He heard the low boom as the truck went up; so did everyone in the Oval Office, but the explosion sounded far away and as old political troopers the Cabinet and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court maintained their poker faces as they stood around the desk in the Oval Office in a show of solidarity with the new leader of the free world. Lyons spoke into his earphone mike. "McMann! Where was that explosion? It sounded too close for comfort."

"A couple of blocks to the north, sir," said McMann. Suddenly Lyons remembered hearing a similar hollow detonation off in the distance, many years before, and what had happened moments later in the Anti-

Terrorism Center in Spokane City Hall. He did not hesitate. He charged into the Oval Office just as Acting President Jenner was saying, "We have attempted to contact the fascist régime in the Northwest with a view toward saving human lives, but apparently they are not interested in sparing their own so-called country and their own captive population the horrors of war, for we have not yet received their reply . . ."

"GET DOWN!" roared Lyons, leaping up onto the desk, grabbing Jenner by the lapels and throwing him down onto the now carpetless floor, covering Jenner's body with his own.

Then the United States received the fascists' reply. Television viewers saw a flash of light as one of the mortar shells landed and detonated in the Rose Garden, a brief blur of falling walls and masonry, and then the transmission was cut off.

At midnight that night, it was announced that rescue teams had finally succeeded in pulling Acting President Hugh Jenner out of the rubble, alive and amazingly unharmed except for a broken arm and a broken bone in his right foot. He had lain on his stomach for hours, covered by the dead body of Agent Lee Lyons, feeling Lyons' blood and fluids oozing all over him. In addition to Lyons, the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, the entire Cabinet, and numerous White House staff and journalists were dead. The six mortar shells had crashed down into the Rose Garden and onto the roof, largely demolished and set fire to the West Wing, and left the historic residence at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue with almost half the famous frontage in rubble. The walls of the West Wing that remained standing were leaning crazily. If a building could look like it was on the losing end of a bar fight, the White House did.

Hugh Jenner was nothing if not a political showman; the next morning the news channels showed him lying in his hospital bed being sworn in as President of the United States by a mere associate Justice, reassuring the nation that truth, justice, and the American Way would triumph, and closing with an emotional meeting with the widow and small son of the heroic Agent Lee Lyons, the man whose death had saved his life and also removed a possible source of uncomfortable knowledge and questions about whether or not he deliberately introduced Georgia Myers into the Oval Office in the hope or knowledge that she might

cack his predecessor. The official government version of Wallace's death was highly sanitized, of course, but enough of the facts eventually came out so that historians would debate for decades afterward the true course of events and Jenner's true motives. He never enlightened them and took his secret, if any, to the grave with him.

After the camera crews had packed up and left, Admiral Hector Brava came in. Jenner handed him a piece of paper. "This came in about an hour ago," he said.

"Ray Ridgeway's reply?" asked Brava, dreading to read it.

"Maybe. It's from the Northmen, anyway. This arrived as an e-mail on my personal phone," said Jenner, his lips compressed. "The one I use only for my family. No official business at all, never, and nobody, I mean *nobody* knows that those four phones even exist at all. But this came to me. I heard it beep in my pocket while I was lying there in the dark with Lee Lyons lying dead on top of me. The phone in my pocket kept ringing and ringing, all that time, driving me fucking out of my mind until I forgot about the pain and the fear, I just wanted that damned phone to stop ringing. This was the call. I printed it out."

On the paper was a beautiful color photo of a Northwest Tricolor flag, with Oregon's famous Mount Hood in the background, under a pristine blue sky. Beneath the flag were three words: *Our turn now.*

XXI

BLITZKRIEG

(JULY 5TH TO AUGUST 5TH)

Therefore, great king . . .
Enter our gates; dispose of us and ours;
For we no longer are defensible.
—Henry the Fifth, Act III, Scene 3

The following leaflet was air dropped over the American lines at Fairfield, Montana on the evening of July 5th:

WHITE AMERICAN SOLDIERS

It's like this, guys. You know what happened at Anaconda, you know what happened to your fleet off our coast, you know what happened to the Doughboy, you know what happened to your Cabinet, and you know what's going to happen to you. By now you all understand that this is only going to end one way. America is done, and so are you.

Or maybe not. Because we Northmen are such nice guys, we're going to give you a chance to live.

Beginning at 0530 hours tomorrow morning, July 6, white soldiers of the U.S. Combined Military Group Center may leave your positions in safety, on foot only, and return to your side of the border, so long as you are covered by a white flag of truce every 30 or 40 men or so, and so long as you remain on the prescribed route. You get onto our Highway 12, what you call Highway 89 on your old outdated American maps. Then you start walking east, and you don't stop until you cross the border at Great Falls.

Remember, no vehicles, if you have any functioning ones left. You can go home, but you're going to walk all the way. You will be escorted at a distance by the men who have defeated you. You may take your personal weapons, which we suggest you turn on the people who sent you here when you get back, and any rations and water supplies you have left, but you don't take so much as a single green apple or a single drink of water from a roadside spigot from this land you came to destroy. Leave the highway, try to take anything or molest anyone on the way, then the deal's off and the SS moves in and shoots you down like dogs.

Oh, and you leave all your nigger and Mexican buddies where they are. They're not going anywhere. Not ever again. When we figure all of you who are of a mind to live have departed, we're coming in and killing every living thing in Fairfield wearing a dark skin or an American uniform.

Your choice, guys.

(signed)
Zachariah Hatfield
GOC Second Army
Northwest Defense Force

State President Red Morehouse and his SS escort arrived at the Second Army headquarters just outside Fairfield around six a.m. on the morning of July the sixth to see first hand what the response would be to the mercy thus extended to the besieged Americans. General Hatfield led the president with his staff to an observation bunker overlooking Highway 89 that had been installed by the NDF engineers at the beginning of the siege, and together they scanned the highway over half a mile away through field glasses. The NDF artillery, which had been shelling Fairfield continually for days, had fallen silent almost forty minutes before. "We heard a lot of shouting and shooting and some explosive detonations in their trenches, all through the night, over the sound of our own guns," said Hatfield.

"Sounded like grenades going off. We figure some of the niggers and Mexicans didn't like the idea of being left behind."

"Still, I wonder how many of the whites actually do love niggers and beaners enough to die for them and with them?" asked Morehouse wonderingly. "How many of our own will we be killing later on today? How many more white lives snuffed out for no other reason than for the mere physical presence of these dark creatures on our continent, where they never should have come?"

"Far more than there should be, I'm sorry to say," said Hatfield. "Almost a hundred years of brainwashing and social engineering has done incredible damage to the white psyche, Mr. President. Those guys over on that side of the border can't think straight any more. Hell, they can barely think at all. We were able to break away from that seventeen years ago in the Northwest, find our courage and our manhood and pick up a rifle to start resisting it. This generation of Americans didn't, and so mentally and morally, they're worse off than we ever were in the skulls full of mush department. I know it's incredible to think that at this late date anybody could actually still believe in liberalism . . . ah, there they go."

"Yes, yes!" whispered Morehouse, watching through the binoculars. "At least some of them won't die for the Jews! Maybe there's hope they can learn wisdom yet! You've got observer teams scanning the whole route, right, to make sure they don't try to smuggle any niggers or mestizos out disguised as whites?"

"Yes, sir, and there will be several checkpoints along the way where our men will be close enough for visual examination," said Hatfield. "Aerial reconnaissance reports are coming in reporting a *lot* of dead bodies down there in their trenches. Looks like they had their own race war last night. They may not have left many blacks and beaners alive for us. At least there are some of them who haven't had their brains washed."

In the steamy dawn, Morehouse could see a ragged column of walking men, appearing seemingly out of the churned-up earth down the asphalt of the highway, heading eastward toward the Border Highway and the McCurtain. They wore old Iraq War-pattern desert camouflage uniforms, and they trudged forward with their heads hung

down, their arms reversed, furtively glancing to their right and left at the NDF and SS troops watching them from the ridges. A number of them were two-man stretcher teams carrying wounded. Here and there in the long, snaking column of men and a few women were white towels and bits of cut-up bed sheets on long sticks and lengths of pipe. "How many does it look like took us up on our offer of surrender, do you think, Zack?" asked Morehouse.

"It's hard to tell from the air, but some of our observers in the copters think it will be as many as forty thousand," said Hatfield. "Forty thousand disgruntled, angry, and humiliated veterans from a defeated army: quite a gift for the U.S.A."

"Much better than forty thousand dead martyrs," agreed Morehouse.

Eric Sellars was monitoring a hand-held mini computer, and now he stepped forward. "Mr. President, General Jackson reports that after yesterday's leaflet drop a significant number of white American troops are starting to abandon their positions in Ponderay and fall back toward Canada."

"Sending 'em back the way they came?" asked Hatfield. "I wonder if the Canucks will welcome them as much coming back as they did when they were coming through? Good to see you again, Colonel," Hatfield added, nodding towards Sellars. "How's Comrade Becky?"

"She's on duty back to the command vehicle, sir," said Sellars, smiling at his wife's old NVA code name.

"Order the attack here for noon, Zack," said Morehouse. "That's long enough for them to make up their minds. Thirty minutes of full aerial and artillery bombardment, then go in and finish it."

"Yes, sir," said Hatfield grimly. "I'll be in the first tank."

Morehouse understood it was useless to try to dissuade him. "Don't get yourself killed, Zack," he admonished. "I'm afraid the Republic is unable to dispense with your services at the moment."

"I'll try not to, Mr. President," replied Hatfield.

"Once we're through here, we have to get your Second and Drones's Fourth Army through almost five hundred miles of mountains, brush, and desert, and get you positioned for the push north."

"What's that?" said Hatfield as he spoke into his field phone. He listened for a few moments. "Okay, roger and out. Some of the Americans have lain down their arms and are approaching our men wanting to surrender and defect, Mr. President, which as you know, we've been allowing for the past day or so. These defectors are telling us that the enemy general, Lisle, shot himself last night. Wrapped himself in the Marine Corps flag before he did so, apparently."

"Not the Stars and Stripes?" asked Morehouse.

"Toilet paper makes a bad shroud, sir," said Hatfield with a snort. "Even the Americans know it by now."

* * *

Casualty summary as of July 11th

NDF military casualties—13,980 dead and 19,039 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—4,202 dead and 6,883 wounded
United States military casualties—483,865 dead and 127,657 wounded
United States civilian casualties—211,654 dead and 701,938 wounded, gassed, or ill from biowar agents, casualties overwhelmingly non-white
Aztlan casualties—No accurate figures available due to complete collapse of Aztec government and society. Military and civilian casualties in first coup d'état on July 10 known to be extensive.

* * *

On the morning of July the twelfth, the combined NDF armies of the southern front launched an invasion into Aztlan, including northern California, northern Nevada, and into American Utah. These included the First Army commanded by John Corbett Morgan, spearheaded by the SS Division Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler, and the Sixth Army led by General Robert "Bobby Bells" DiBella, with the SS Division Viking attached.

The terrain on the California front, on either side of Interstate Five, was rough and mountainous, hard going, but it was also sparsely

populated, and there were few targets of military importance. Most of the inhabitants of these rugged rural areas were white, and they either avoided or actively assisted the NDF. On more than one occasion, the advancing Northmen came across mass graves and killing fields full of mestizo corpses, both military and civilian, who had not been slain by the NDF but by parties unknown. "It's the same thing that happened during World War Two on the Eastern Front," Morehouse told his generals in an encrypted conference call via a Lazarus Bird satellite. "The Wehrmacht and SS found barns and ditches full of dead Jews and Communists, shot or simply hacked to pieces or beaten to death by the local people in Poland and Lithuania and the Ukraine, people who had lived under the left-liberal dictatorship and who had simply had enough. That's what's happening here, and I suppose we had best prepare ourselves for future historians blaming the NDF for some of these killings and calling them horrible Nazi atrocities, just like the Germans were blamed for the massacre of the Polish army officers at Katyn."

The Ejército Nacional de Aztlan, the regular Aztec army, had largely fallen apart. It consisted mostly of Aztlan's actual Hispanic population, hapless Mayan conscripts, many of whom originally came from remote villages in Yucatan and Guatemala so far out in the jungle that they did not even speak Spanish, but weird ancient Indian dialects no one else could understand, including their commanding officers. The regulars were poorly armed, poorly trained, incompetently led by drunken and drug-addicted officers, were low on ammunition and supplies, and many of their soldiers did not even have boots. They had been driven north during the invasion like a herd of cattle by their officers, in some cases literally driven with bullwhips, and they were not difficult to stampede back south again.

The *Asaltos*, the Assault Guards, were a different kettle of fish. They were the political enforcers, the actual muscle of El Presidente or whoever turned out to succeed El Presidente once the revolts in Sacramento and Los Angeles sorted themselves out. They were armed and equipped with top-of-the-line Chinese weapons and gear, trained by instructors from the People's Liberation Army and from North Korea, and they were actually paid, sometimes even on time. They had

armor and heavy weapons, including tanks and field guns and Katyusha rocket launchers, or at least Chinese Katyusha knock-offs.

The *Asaltos* were also much more politically and racially motivated. Where most of the EdA was comprised of non-English speaking mestizos from Mexico itself or points south, the *Asaltos* were largely Americanized Hispanics whose native language was English, and who were thoroughly indoctrinated with the principles of La Raza and left-liberalism of the classic Sixties and Seventies variety. Many of them had been police officers under the old American régime, and that included a lot of former FATPOs. There was also a stiff leavening of former gang members from Los Angeles and drug cartel hoodlums from Mexico itself. The *Asaltos* were mediocre soldiers at best, but they were tougher and more dangerous than the regular army and more adapted to modern warfare than the Yucatan banana pickers or Chiapas peasants of the EdA.

They stood and fought in a few of the small towns of northern California such as Crescent City, Yreka, Weed and Redding. All of these towns fell to the NDF one after the other, in the face of combined air and artillery assault and invincible infantry; the remnants retreated southward to fight either for or against El Presidente. The NDF was demonstrating that complete control of the air worked for whoever had it, propeller or jet. Eureka and Arcata on the coast were captured by SS units in an amphibious landing. The overwhelming majority of the brown-skinned civil population fled southward to the teeming barrios of Los Angeles, Sacramento, and the Valley. The simple fact was that mestizos might make vicious thugs and gang-bangers, but they were not very brave, and they simply did not make good soldiers. Even Simon Bolivar himself had always been compelled to make sure that his armies of liberation were officered by Europeans.

Then on July the 20th, the NDF advance stopped at Redding, and the invading troops began to consolidate their gains in the hundreds of thousands of square miles of northern California they had conquered. The military expelled or liquidated mestizos, Chinese, and other people who had no business on the North American continent, while they and special political cadres from the Party began to contact, assess, organize,

and prepare the remaining white population of the area for assimilation into the Northwest American Republic.

* * *

On the northern front the Fourth Army (A.J. Drones), the Second Army (Zack Hatfield), the Third Army (William Jackson) and the Florian Geyer SS Division invaded British Columbia and Alberta. Jackson's Third Army marched on Calgary, while the other two generals began a westward drive toward the Pacific coast where the bulk of the province's population was concentrated. Drones and the Fourth Army swung wide and north to capture Kelowna and Kamloops, while Hatfield's forces hugged the border and approached Vancouver after rolling over Chilliwack, entering the city through Surrey. Yet another NDF military formation, the British Columbia Expeditionary Force (BCEF), launched an amphibious attack and captured the town of Victoria, as well as executing several paratroop drops on strategic points surrounding the largely non-white city of Vancouver. The Northwest Republic had five million men and women under arms, and they seemed determined to give every one of them a chance at some action.

It was in Victoria, B.C., after the sea landings, that the media first reported a phenomenon that would become very common during this later phase of the war. CNN and Fox News showed NDF tanks and armored vehicles rolling across the Johnson Street Bridge and into the city, and they were met not with gunfire, or the flight of refugees, or by sullen silence and withdrawal. Instead crowds of cheering Canadians greeted the invading Northmen. Teenaged white girls ran forward and hugged and kissed SS troopers, and people threw the marching men food and bottles of Labatt's. Generations of rule by the politically correct, breathtakingly corrupt tyrants in Ottawa who groveled before the Jews were coming to an end, and western Canadians were overjoyed. Years of hate laws, legalized discrimination, uncontrolled Third World immigration, Human Rights Tribunals, prison and murder and oppression were over now. The RCMP, the bureaucrats, and the mud people were fleeing in panic, and the soldiers of the Northwest American Republic were being welcomed in Canada as liberators.

Fighting was harder in the Vancouver area, where Canadian troops and large numbers of Chinese and warlike Sikhs were concentrated, with their own ethnic militias. Some of the Canadian soldiers fought for their masters in Ottawa, and even fought and died bravely. Some threw down their weapons and fled. Some Canadian units dragged their feet; they arranged for crucial communications to go astray and responded slowly and reluctantly to any order to engage the enemy. Individual Canadian soldiers crept out of their positions in the Vancouver suburbs at night by the dozens and then by the hundreds, surrendering to the NDF, defecting and even asking to join the Northmen in liberating their land.

The government of the Republic responded by doing everything they could to keep white civilian casualties low throughout Canada. In Vancouver and Calgary, no NAR gas or biological attacks were directed against the cities. Civilian authorities in the towns and countryside who promised to remain neutral and to cooperate with the NDF when asked, for the benefit of their communities, were allowed to remain in place. Encamped NDF troops were kept in camp and not allowed to mingle with the civilian population just yet, to reduce the possibility of antagonistic incidents.

On the other hand, the Northmen showed no mercy to the mud-colored immigrants who had swarmed over Western Canada for generations. After the Bluelight projectors took care of the Canadian Air Force in the same manner they'd done with the Americans, the Songbirds and Starfighters swarmed over the border and the Straits of Juan de Fuca in their thousands from their airfields in Bellingham, Sedro Woolley and Anacortes. Like droning swarms of bees or locusts, the small, inexpensive prop jobs sometimes blotted out the sun, and the low rumble of their methane and alcohol engines mixed with the wailing of the air raid sirens became Vancouver's signature theme song. The Luftwaffe pounded the non-white sections of Vancouver without mercy for days, sending waves of mostly Chinese refugees fleeing from the city in a motley of vehicles with their most prized possessions tied on top in standard Third World fashion. There they ran into the westward-moving NDF Second and Third Armies. Few Chinese or Hindus made it across the plains to Saskatchewan, but as with California in the South,

the NDF was not responsible for the majority of the dark-skinned corpses that lay rotting in the forests and on the wide plains. The white people of Canada had suffered long, and a heavy reckoning was due.

After almost a week of bombing and also shelling from the 88s and 75s that surrounded the city in Surrey, Burnaby, Richmond, and Gibson, then came the rumbling and squealing treads and echoing thunderclaps of the cannon of the Rhinos, the NDF's workhorse tank. A souped-up model of the old German Tiger with plasti-steel armor twice as strong and half the weight, capable of climbing over a Bremer wall or other such obstacle in a matter of seconds, with a special beak or ram called the "horn" mounted on the front for plowing through walls or buildings or any obstruction, the Rhinos immediately seized control of the Vancouver street fighting and rendered the whole exercise simply a mopping-up operation. Vancouver was a large city; moving carefully and methodically, block to block and street to street, it took three days for the NDF to occupy the city and snuff out the last of Ottawa's forces.

Oddly enough, historians and psychologists later decided that it was one thing that broke the morale of Vancouver's pro-Ottawa defenders more than anything else, and led them to drag their feet and then lay down their arms. This was the news, which was never mentioned at all in the state-controlled Canadian media, that virtually the entire Jewish population of Vancouver had already been evacuated from the city. There had been rumors to that effect before the NAR attack, of course, since people could hardly help noticing when their Jewish friends, acquaintances, and co-workers mysteriously disappeared. But now everyone knew why. The rats had deserted the sinking ship, and they had left the *goyim* to fight and die for them. Everyone knew it, and in the back of every Canadian soldier, policeman, or citizen's mind who wanted to resist, the nagging sense of betrayal and *what-the-fuck?* simply would not be laid to rest.

The invaders were immeasurably assisted in their task with intelligence and support provided by NVA Commandant George Magas and his small unit of about sixty men and women, the last active unit of the Northwest Volunteer Army in existence. After the Longview Treaty twelve years before, most of the Canadian NVA had gathered

one day in November at the White Rock border post. They shouldered arms, and to the sound of their own bagpipers, they had marched south into the new Northwest Republic, and gone on with their lives. Magas and his holdouts had elected to stay in their homeland and fight on. There had been almost two hundred of them at that time. They were never officially de-commissioned or ordered to disband, which was always a sore point during the rare diplomatic exchanges between Canada and the NAR, but they went underground. Down through the past twelve years, the Ottawa regime had never had things all their own way in B.C., thanks to the Vancouver Brigade. Bombs had gone off, politicians and officials had been assassinated, acts of sabotage had occurred, Chinese and Indian property had burned in the night. The RCMP and assorted left-wing death squads acting for the Ottawa régime had ruthlessly hunted the brigade's cells, and many had died or had to be spirited south into the Republic when the heat became too great, but the Vancouver Brigade had never given up.

It was the Vancouver Brigade who lynched the city's Bengali woman mayor, Indira Vishnamurti. One of her own white staffers betrayed her as she fled down the shell-blasted ruins of Twelfth Avenue, seeking to escape from the advancing Northwest tanks. She was dragged screaming back to the Vancouver City Hall by a squad of NVA guerillas, where she was stripped naked in retaliation for her similar treatment of a white woman suspected (incorrectly) of racism some years before. Then she was hanged from one of the windows over the portico. Her dangling body swung over the classic art deco entrance to greet the first NDF troops at the city hall.

She was still swinging there as Minister of Security Frank Barrow pulled up in an armored personnel carrier to assume official control of the building and whatever remained of its contents. With Barrow was his blonde and Canadian-born wife, former NVA Captain Jane Chenault, who was now the senior Permanent Secretary for Education, essentially the senior civil servant working under the Cabinet Minister for that department. For the duration of the war, Jane had reverted to her reserve military rank of colonel, and she had promised her husband that if she were not allowed some role in the conquest of Canada, their future married life would be something to make him shudder. Like all

wise husbands who know when their wives really mean it, Frank gave in immediately. Jane was proud and pleased to discover that her statuesque figure could still fit into her old Kevlar vest from her NVA days.

Greeting them on the steps of the city hall were Commandant George Magas, a small and nondescript man who looked like a schoolteacher or possibly a shoe salesman. Sometimes he had talked his way out of tight corners simply based on his appearance alone; surely, someone so mild and inoffensive-looking could never be the terrorist mastermind who had almost single-handedly kept a war going for twelve years? With Magas were about forty of his people, men and women dressed in civilian clothes and carrying weapons slung over their shoulders. Magas stepped forward and saluted Barrow, who returned the salute. "Vancouver Brigade reporting that this building has been secured, sir," he said. He looked at Jane. "You guys sure took your time, eh?"

"Yes, we're twelve years late," said Jane, tears welling in her eyes. "I'm so sorry, George. We had to do what we did. There wasn't any other choice."

"Well, you're here now, Janie," said Magas. "I just wish Marc was around to see it." Marc Chenault had been Jane's first husband, an NVA man who one winter's night was murdered on a cold and rainy street in Vancouver by the notorious CSIS secret police agency.

"He's here with us in spirit, comrade," she replied.

On July 28th, the NDF crossed over the northern border of British Columbia into Alaska. Ketchikan fell the same day, and on July 31st, the state capitol of Juneau was captured by a combined assault force of SS paratroops and NDF line units who crossed the Gastineau Channel on pontoon bridges thrown up by the engineers, as well as on hundreds of small boats piloted by local white people, in a kind of reverse Dunkirk. Resistance was minimal, and Juneau went down almost without a shot. The governor and some of the state legislature had already fled to Anchorage; other legislators remained in Juneau and received the invaders on the state house steps. Twelve of them then and there renounced their allegiance to the United States and the rump session formally applied for Alaska's admission to the Northwest American Republic. The United States concentrated what troops they had at Fort Wainwright around Anchorage, while the governor spent hours every

night on live television, babbling long quasi-Churchillian rants about fighting them on the beaches and in the fields and the mountains, so forth and so on. He was rather obviously drunk most of the time.

Then the northward offensive halted as well, and the NDF dug in and began to establish the foundations and infrastructure to bring what Canadian and Alaskan territory had been overrun into the Republic.

* * *

The decision to halt the advance during the Seven Weeks' War was one of the most passionately debated issues ever to confront the NAR's government and its citizens. To this very day, there are angry and stubborn people in the Republic who remain convinced that it was a mistake, and that the NDF should have marched onward until white rule had been completely restored over all 49 of the old United States of America, with a naval assault on Hawaii planned for later. In a speech to Parliament on the fourth day of August, just before the armistice, President Morehouse explained the rationale behind what had been done.

In his memorable address, Morehouse said in part; "For many years, back in the days when our Movement was nothing but a few isolated individuals playing with their personal computers, we debated among ourselves the pros and cons of the whole idea of territorial separatism for our race in North America. Long after the whole idea was clearly impractical and impossible of attainment, there were those among us who insisted that somehow we could achieve the old dream of an all-white United States of America, from sea to shining sea, an America permanently frozen in the idyllically perceived past of the Nineteen Fifties, or Sixties, or Seventies, where Beaver Cleaver with his plaid shirt and his cowlick plays with Marcia Brady the cheerleader in her bobbi sox, in an endless suburb of tract houses with two cars in every garage, backyard barbecues, church on Sunday and nary a single gibbering black or brown face to be seen or a single gabbled word in pidgin Spanish to be heard.

"That was a beautiful dream," Morehouse went on. "Please understand that I do not mean to mock it, or the small group of elderly

people among us who may remember the tag end of it. It is a good thing to retain some fleeting childhood memories of a better way of life. But that dream is gone now, and lest we forget, even when it partly did exist in reality, it was based upon the American destruction of Germany, on our slaughter of millions of our racial brothers and sisters in Europe, and on our handing over untold millions of people of all races to the brutal and bloody sway of world Communism, which was Judaism in disguise.

"Today, we are again faced with this issue, this dream of somehow taking back the whole of the United States for our race," Morehouse continued, looking out over the rows of Parliamentary deputies. "Again it was, and is, a noble dream, yet we still must accept that it is only a dream. That is so much harder now, because now we contemplate the future not as a small band of eccentrics with computers, but in a time of glorious victory and power, when it seems that we are invincible and the world is ours to command. And this is the most dangerous time of all for us, for make no mistake, my comrades, my fellow citizens, my Folk, we *could still lose this war.* Let me tell you how.

"The first reason I will give you as to why we must cease our advance and be content with what we now have will sound the weakest of all. It will sound crass and petty, and in a sense, it is, but it is nevertheless insurmountable.

"It is true that we have millions of men and women under arms. They have been victorious on all fronts, and they have added vast expanses of territory to our Homeland in a period of a few short weeks. But never forget the salient fact that compared to the rest of the world's community of nations, the Northwest Republic is *poor,* dirt poor! Our taxes are the lowest of any developed nation, and we use our resources to provide for our own population rather than export and sell them abroad. One of the reasons we have been forced to develop our very people themselves as human weapons for our defense is that we simply cannot afford to engage in a high-tech arms race with the rest of the world.

"The five million or so people we now have in uniform are almost all reservists, who sooner or later must return to their jobs and their lives here in the Republic, or else the country will begin to suffer

damage and deterioration from their absence. They *cannot* be used as an army of conquest and occupation for an expanse of territory the size of North America. Such a lengthy occupation is unsustainable and would eventually destroy us if we attempted it, just as the United States with all its power could never successfully occupy Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, or even tiny Gaza. If nothing else, such an undertaking would simply bankrupt us, and it would destroy the inner human and moral fiber of the nation we have begun to build here in the Northwest over the past twelve years."

Morehouse paused in his speech and then went on. "The second reason we cannot and must not attempt to win back the entire North American continent, even from a position of crushing victory such as we now enjoy, is the same one we faced back in our computer-game days, only this time in reality. There are now approximately one hundred and fifty million non-whites of various kinds in North America. What are we going to do with them? No, I mean *really,* what are we going to do with them? Kill them all? Chase them out? Load millions of niggers into cargo holds on ships, take them over to West Africa and dump them all on the beach? Chase every Spanish-speaking mud person back south of the Rio Grande with guns and clubs? What will we do, really? Before, all this was simply theoretical, but now that the white man does in fact have some military force at his command, we have to examine seriously the logistics involved in all these options that we casually tossed around back in our computer game days.

"I won't speak to you of moral considerations, since in view of the terrible damage and destruction these creatures have wrought, there can be no question but that we have the absolute and unshakeable moral right to remove them from North America, however we can. But this is not a moral problem, it is a technical and logistic one, and realistically, it is almost as insurmountable as it was back in the computer days. True, five million soldiers sounds like a lot, but in addition to occupying and administering huge cities and immense territories, how exactly do we use them to exterminate or drive out one hundred and fifty million people? And how many white people will be killed during such an open race war as we would ignite? There are so few of us left that any further depletion of our gene pool through senseless violence urgently needs to

be avoided. We are experiencing logistic and administrative problems enough in assimilating northern California and southwestern Canada, and that alone is a project which is clearly going to take many years. I won't belabor the point. We could kill some of the muds and frighten others out, true, but what we would end up doing is simply making one hell of a mess that would do more harm to the continent's remaining white population than even the continuation of the present situation.

"Finally," Morehouse went on, "We seem to forget that we still have powerful enemies and there is in fact a rest of the world whose opinions and interests we cannot simply ignore. For example, we have received immense help from the commonwealth of Russia during this past crisis, support which has sealed the bond between our two countries begun at our nation's founding stronger than ever before. But would that bond be so strong when we are no longer defending our own lives and land but are stalking across the continent leaving piles of black and brown corpses as we go?

"The enemy media and intellectual élite are going to spend the next century accusing us of committing atrocities during this war, and some of the things we have done, such as the use of gas and biological weapons probably fall into that category, yes. But it is crystal clear to anyone, and it will remain crystal clear to anyone no matter how the lefty-libs obscure things in the future, that *we were attacked first,* and that we were defending our very existence as a nation. But will that distinction be as clear-cut if we invade the United States itself and attempt to conquer them and cleanse the land of racial contaminants?" Morehouse asked.

"We also need to remember that even though they have been defeated in the field, there in fact remains a United States government and a United States ruling class, a ruling class which is still extremely wealthy and which still commands the shattered remains of a United States military, including the nuclear missiles in those silos in Kansas and Minnesota and North Dakota. A brave young woman sacrificed her life in order to stop those missiles from being fired at us by a deranged man, but if we persist in threatening the power and the wealth of the soulless men in suits who still rule the United States, if we make it clear that we're going for their throat and that they have no chance for personal or financial or political survival, that we mean to take everything away

from them, not just their condos in Seattle but their summer homes on Long Island and their winter mansions in Palm Beach as well, their money and their power and all that makes them who they are, then the doors to those missile silos will open again.

"The current American administration, as corrupt and full of hatred for us as it is, is sufficiently practical not to want to carry the can for contaminating the entire northern hemisphere with radioactive fallout and being responsible for the death of millions of people, mostly their own," President Morehouse told them. "We must now show the same kind of pragmatism. It is said that war is only politics by other means, and that's true, but politics is the art of the possible. This is a strange kind of MAD, Mutually Assured Destruction. The United States of America and the Northwest Republic can destroy one another right now, they through their nuclear missiles and we through our troops and our ability to instigate total race war of the kind that will make the U.S.A. ungovernable and cause their society, already stumbling and battered, to collapse completely. Now is the time for both sides to back off and settle up.

"I will be speaking tomorrow with the American president, Hugh Jenner. Don't worry, comrades. I won't be giving away the store. The Northwest Republic is due a healthy slice of the spoils of victory, and we shall have it."

* * *

On the morning of August the fifth, the two sides finally met, if that is the word for staring at one another on huge wall-sized plasma screens. The two presidents and the two War Cabinets, one set in Washington, D.C., and the other in Washington State, were connected courtesy of a Russian communications satellite. Hugh Jenner still had his arm and foot in a cast. The men and women who around him in the Pentagon Situation Room (the one in the White House had been demolished) were people whom he had dragooned in to fill the places of the slain secretaries and staff members and administrators. They were second-raters and time-servers, politicians and hacks and bureaucrats, because those were all he could get to take jobs that had proven highly

hazardous to the health of those who held them. They huddled like Armani-clad sheep, quailing beneath the cold and homicidal stare of the Northwest Republic's assembled government, mostly bearded men but a few women as well, every one of them including their State President wearing the uniform that bore over the right jacket pocket the eagle and Swastika emblem that once more struck terror into the world.

"My God, it's like looking at a Roman legion," muttered Carl Nelson, the new Vice President of the United States.

Jenner cleared his throat. "Mr. Morehouse, I would like to . . ."

"Shut up, Hugh," said his old enemy, Finance Minister Ray Ridgeway. (*Is that Annette standing behind him?* Jenner wondered. *God, she grew into a beauty, didn't she?*) "Our boss is going to talk, and you're going to listen. He's going to tell you how things are going to be, and you're going to agree, because you don't have any choice."

Red Morehouse spoke without formal salutation or courtesy. "If this goes on your government, your military, and your whole society are going to bleed out. We both know it. This isn't just military defeat. It's not just that we destroyed your ships and your aircraft and your first line soldiers, it's that you can't replace them. We didn't just defeat your armies; we defeated *you,* all of you. Both of us know this, Jenner, so let's have a moratorium for once on arrogant American swaggering and boasting. To quote those African-Americans you people claim to love so much, right now you niggaz ain't shit.

"Don't bother to threaten us with nukes unless you're genuinely suicidal," Morehouse continued. "Yes, I know, you do still have that final ace up your sleeve, just like we have our phosgene and our anthrax. If that's the way you want it to play out, we can go that route and everybody dies. Whoopee. Yeah, you can open your football and finish giving those codes Hunter Wallace started reading out a month ago, and I can give an order and have everybody on Pennsylvania Avenue choking to death in their own lung fluid in ten minutes. Let's take all that as read.

"Now, here's the deal," he said. "Tell your Mexican buddies in Los Angeles when they stop squabbling and sending each other to the firing squads, that we're taking all of California north of Redding. The Aztecs can have Redding itself, because my people down there tell me

it's a shithole and not worth having. We'll be nice guys and we'll also give the Aztecs back what we took of Nevada; it's useless desert full of nothing but armadillos and scorpions, and it's not worth maintaining a garrison there. We don't want Las Vegas. If we got hold of it we'd shut it down. You're also giving us Juneau, Alaska, and the surrounding Pacific coastal islands. The rest of Alaska you can keep, if the people there will let you. We're in touch with the Free Alaska Movement, and we have guaranteed their right to opt either for full admission into the Republic or independence, whichever they choose. I believe they're planning a plebiscite on their state's future, sometime in the next couple of months. They will have it, and it will be free and fair. Who knows? The voters may decide to stay with the United States. You guys can campaign and use your wonderful democracy, you can bribe and horse trade and do all your little electoral monkeyshines, but if there is any attempt to use force to interfere with the election, or to rig the results, then the NDF goes up there and works you American assholes over. Remember, we don't need the oil. We don't use that much of it."

Morehouse went on: "Now, speaking of our northern exposure, I will be informing Prime Minister Simoneau that we get all of British Columbia and Alberta below a line running more or less between Edmonton and Prince George. If the Canucks want to say fuck it and just throw in the northernmost sections of those provinces, fine. I don't know what use we can make of tundra and caribou, but what the hey?"

"And what does the Canadian Prime Minister have to say about that?" Jenner managed to interject.

"If he didn't want to lose part of his country he shouldn't have helped you dogs attack us," said Morehouse. "The Canadians have been needling us and trying to undermine the Republic for years, dancing to the Jews' tune. He and his government need to learn that what goes around comes around. We will negotiate a separate peace with Canada, but I don't anticipate any problems. They know full well we can pop the top on our little toys in Toronto and Montreal and Ottawa just as easily as anywhere else. We have enough Canadians on our side who have faced the Human Rights Tribunals who would volunteer to do it in a heartbeat. You will be receiving by e-mail a complete copy of the draft peace treaty terms. I will appoint one of our permanent

undersecretaries from the Foreign Ministry to deal with any quibbles you have, but I wouldn't bother if I were you. He's just going to say no. You have one week, otherwise we assume it's still on and we send battalion-sized Flying Columns deep and wide into the United States to see what kind of racial turmoil we can stir up. You don't seem to have sufficient military forces left to stop us. We can pretty much stroll in anywhere right now and do whatever we want.

Morehouse leaned forward: "Now, there is one demand of ours that is non-negotiable and which you will fulfill immediately, or by God, sir, we won't stop coming at you until the NDF is marching down Pennsylvania Avenue," he said. "You have someone of ours in a freezer locker at the FBI morgue; at least you better pray that you still have her there, because if you have destroyed the mortal remains of Georgia Myers, some very bad things are going to happen. We want her back. We made her a promise, and we're going to keep it, even in death. That girl is Coming Home. You will arrange through the Red Cross to hand her body over to us at the Helena border post within 24 hours. Tell the Red Cross to contact Major Gustav Hallstrom, the Civil Guard commander in Helena, when her coffin arrives. He will arrange for DNA testing to make sure you're not trying to play one last chickenshit game with us. Fuck with us on this, Jenner, and I promise you that I will have your balls cut off." The screen went blank.

* * *

The Seven Weeks' War—June 19th to August 5th

NDF military casualties—18,765 dead and 24,765 wounded
NAR civilian casualties—5,112 dead and 7,387 wounded
United States military casualties—541,435 dead and 170,766 wounded
United States civilian casualties—274,707 dead and 733,654 wounded
Aztlan casualties—No accurate figures, International Red Cross est. 1,000,000.
Canadian Military Casualties—8,654 dead and 6,987 wounded.
Canadian Civilian Casualties—287,782 dead and 130,355 wounded, casualties overwhelmingly non-white.

Decorations (United States)

Congressional Medal of Honor (all services)—57
Army Distinguished Service Cross—118
Navy Cross—12
Air Force Cross—18
Silver Star—212

Decorations (Northwest Defense Force, all services)

Knight's Cross—30
Iron Cross—2,147 inc. Eli and Thomas Horakova, father and son, and Hamish and Margaret McDowell, husband and wife.
Legion of Honor (Civilian)—290

Decorations (Canada)

Victoria Cross—3
Cross of Valour—7
Decoration for Bravery (RCMP)—10

* * *

On a hot afternoon late in August, an official NAR government sedan pulled up in front of a house in Missoula, Montana. A subaltern opened the car door and a tall and handsome middle-aged man with a beard, dressed in an NDF general's gray uniform, got out and walked to the front door of the house and rang the bell. Millie Campbell answered the door. She and Jenny Stockdale had just arrived back from Crater Lake along with the children she and her fellow Mama Bears had been teaching and guarding during the war. "G'day, Mrs. Campbell," said the man, his accent still Australian despite the many years he had spent in the Northwest. "I'm General Charles Randall of the War Prevention Bureau."

"Yes, I know who you are. I've seen you on television," said Millie, her heart climbing into her throat in fear. "Is it about my husband?"

"Yes, but don't worry, he's all right," Randall assured her. He looked behind her, saw Jenny standing there, and smiled. "Jen! Long time no see!"

"Good to see you again too, Charlie," said Jenny, genuinely pleased. "I was pretty sure you guys were the ones who abducted my brother. You say he's all right? Is he back in the country?"

"Yes, and he'll be here in a bit, but he had something he had to take care of first," said Randall. "This visit is something we owe you and your family, Mrs. Campbell," he said, turning to Millie. "I was responsible for your husband's absence during a very critical time in your lives. It was very important, actually vital, as you'll hear. I think I owe you an explanation, and since the whole Republic and the world is going to know this story, I think it's right that you hear it from me and from Robert first. May I come in?"

At that moment Bob was in fact across town, along with Betsy Parris, who had accompanied him on the long and complex trip across the continent and through the battle lines. He had just delivered Allura Myers to her new family. She now sat in her mother's old playpen, which had been resurrected from the attic. She was playing with a music box, banging it on the floor and trying to sing. Bob had no choice: he told Clancy Myers, Kevin Myers, and Kevin's wife Tamara of Georgia's death, baldly and simply, with no details spared and no attempt to whitewash or exculpate his own role in events. "To say I'm sorry doesn't even begin to cover it," concluded Bob miserably. "I failed you. I promised I would bring your little girl home."

"But you did," said Clancy, looking at the baby Allura in the pen.

When Campbell finally returned to his own home, he was surprised to find General Randall already there, and relieved in the extreme that Randall had told his wife and Jenny Stockdale where he had been and what he had been doing. He wasn't sure Jason and the Horakovas would believe him; at least now, he had witnesses to back him up. "I just have one question," said Millie later when they were finally alone.

"Just one?" asked Bob with a chuckle.

She pointed at Richie's tattoo on his forearm. "*Who the hell is Lila?*"

* * *

The sky was almost black on the afternoon they buried Georgia Myers on Mount Sentinel. Her grave overlooked the University grounds, and from its foot one could just barely glimpse the roof of the house on Daly Avenue where she had lived as a child, and to which she had so longed to return. This was as close as she would ever get now, but her daughter would live and grow to womanhood there.

Lightning flickered and thunder rumbled distantly in the sky above as the long procession wound up the hill on the road that had been specially cut and graded by the NDF engineers, following the horse-drawn caisson that bore the casket. The mourners were headed by the State President of the Northwest Republic, along with many civil and military dignitaries as well as the family of the dead woman, as well as honor guards from the SS and the Old NVA Association. Bob was there in full Civil Guard dress uniform. Betsy Parris wore a black dress with long sleeves that discreetly covered her tattoos. Georgia's sister-in-law Tamara Myers carried her little daughter Allura up the hill in her arms. The solemn child clutched her Raggedy Ann doll; she did not cry.

At the site of the open grave with its white marble obelisk, the pipes and drums and band of the Northwest Scots Guards sounded *Molendinar.* The speeches were few and short; Clancy, Bob, Kevin, Jenny and President Morehouse each said a few words, but there was little to say. The subject was too great a one for words. Morehouse actually said only three sentences. "We have kept our promise to you, comrade. Thank you, from all of us. We will not forget."

On the coffin were the Northwest Tricolor and the black beret and leather gloves of a Northwest Volunteer. By unanimous vote of the Old NVA Association, Georgia Myers had been awarded posthumous membership in the Northwest Volunteer Army, the only person ever so honored, before or since. The 12-man firing party was provided in equal part by both the ONVAA and the SS. The former Volunteers fired weapons that had actually been used in combat by Northwest Volunteers during the War of Independence, thus establishing a permanent tradition. Before the coffin was lowered into the rocky soil, the Tricolor was removed and folded and handed to Clancy Myers. Allura would receive it when she came of age.

The rain that threatened all day did not come until the evening, after the crowd was gone, and only the Eternal Flame on the white marble slab pierced the darkness. It hissed and sputtered in the rain, but did not go out. The flame and the long forks of Montana lightning in the big sky illuminated the words on the stone:

Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

Part Three

The Gods of the Dawn

Partial excerpt from an article in *The Encyclopedia of Northwest Biography*

OGLEVY, Cmdt. Oscar Clinton—Arguably the most famous, or infamous, of the leaders of the NVA Flying Columns during the five-year War of Independence. Acknowledged as a brilliant commander and master of guerrilla tactics, Oglevy and his North Idaho Rangers gained a reputation as deadly effective but also brutal and merciless killers during the war, a legacy which even some NVA veterans find troubling . . . A little over two years after the Sixteen Days Rebellion in Coeur d'Alene, Oglevy's unit ambushed a convoy of militarized Idaho state police and their U.S. Special Forces instructors near Elk River, Idaho, in a complex attack, a combination of IEDs, rifle grenades and small arms . . . By completely destroying an American force of 147 personnel outnumbering his unit by almost three-to-one and sustaining casualties of only three men wounded, Oglevy's action established the NVA as a true fighting force and not a simple gang of "terrorists." The incident also produced one of the most iconic images of the war, when the victorious Volunteers laid out a number of dead Americans in front of their burning vehicles and took a famous photograph of Oglevy holding up a broom, signifying a clean sweep . . . The Elk River ambush is the subject of a popular rebel song.

The Boys of Elk River

We honor in song and in story the names
of the patriot men,
Whose names are immortal in glory, who
took back our freedom again.
Forget not the boys of Elk River, who
feared not the might of the foe.
The day that they marched into battle, they
laid all those steroid thugs low!

So here's to the boys of Elk River, those
Volunteers gallant and true,
They fought for the Northwest Tricolor, and
conquered the red, white and blue!

On the 28th day of November, the cops
turned down Idaho Eight,
In a convoy of Humvees and deuces, to
keep their appointment with fate.
They were all on the way to Elk River,
and never expected to stop.
But they met with the boys from the Column,
who made a clean sweep of the lot!

So here's to the boys of Elk River, those
Volunteers gallant and true,
They fought for the Northwest Tricolor, and
conquered the red, white and blue!

The sun in the west it was sinking. 'Twas
the eve of a cold winter's day,
When the trucks we'd been eagerly waiting,
rolled into the spot where we lay.
Then over the hills rang the thunder, of
Semtex and fifty White guns,
And the flames from the trucks sent the message
that the bold NVA men had won!

So here's to the boys of Elk River, those
Volunteers gallant and true,
They fought for the Northwest Tricolor, and
conquered the red, white and blue!

—The Second Generation, *Songs of Freedom* album
©Bifrost Music, Seattle

XXII

Lost Creek

(32 years, seven months after Longview)

History is the version of past events that people have decided to agree upon.
—Napoleon Bonaparte

Colonel Robert Campbell, who at the age of 46 was now the head of the Civil Guard's Montana regional Criminal Investigation Division, shook his salt-and-pepper head in bemused admiration. "I'm sorry," he said, "I still can't wrap my mind around it. Where the hell did you come from again?"

"From down in the number four traverse trench," replied his daughter-in-law, Allura Myers Campbell, a graduate student in archaeology at the University of Montana. She was wearing khaki shorts, a khaki work shirt, mud-caked work boots and knee socks, and a large floppy straw hat to protect her head from the sun, which in May was already becoming uncomfortably hot in the pine hills of Lost Creek. She looked so much like her mother that she sometimes gave Bob a bad moment if she came through a door unexpectedly, as if he were looking at Georgia's ghost. "It rained this morning, hence the mud up to my knees. We've gone eight feet down now, and we're into the very late Pleistocene era, but the middle strata are definitely from the Neolithic time period we're interested in, Level One, which is from about eleven thousand years ago. I found another flint point, a big one. It could have been either a knife or a spear point, and it's in good condition. Took me almost four hours to get it free and tweeze it out. It's in the lab tent for cleaning, and they'll send it to UM for carbon-dating, but I'm pretty sure it's contemporary with the main site, maybe even the mound itself."

"That's not what I meant, Ally. I meant what happened to that roly-poly baby who used to go flying around old Clancy's house on Daly Avenue, chasing Kevin and the cats?" said Bob. "You're twenty-two years old, now, right? Isn't it time you stopped growing, girl?"

"I think I have, I just never grew out of making mud pies, as you can see," said Ally with a smile. "Hi, Uncle Tom," she greeted the second man beside Campbell. She had grown up with a plethora of "aunts" and "uncles" in the extended Myers-Horakova-Campbell-Stockdale clan. "Don't tell me we have a spy here in the dig?"

"Not to my knowledge, no," answered Captain Tom Horakova of the Bureau of State Security, who had driven out to the Lost Creek archaeological dig site with Bob Campbell. Whereas Campbell wore his gray-green Civil Guard uniform, Tom was in civilian clothes; BOSS agents rarely wore their SS black togs completely devoid of insignia, which was their service's formal attire. Tom was not quite so square and thickset as his brother was and his father had been, having a touch more of Lorna's Irish blood in his makeup, but the family resemblance was strong nonetheless. "Hopefully you won't have any out here later on, either, but I'll be around, just to make sure."

"Who ever thought ancient history could become so politically sensitive?" commented Allura.

"History is always politically sensitive," said Bob. "That's one reason men fight, in order to gain the power to write it."

"Jeez, I hope we don't have any bad boys in this group that's coming to visit," said Allura. "I'm really looking forward to meeting everybody in the delegation, especially Doctor Haskins from Oxford. He's considered the world's greatest living authority on prehistoric man. I made sure I read all his books before I even set foot out here." The young woman looked over at the gray-green official vehicle the two older men had arrived in. "Is that one of the new flying cars?" she asked curiously. "I hear you guys in the cops are getting them now, even if us lowly civvies can't have them yet."

"Give it a couple of years for Cascade Motors to get the bugs worked out and they'll be on the market, if you can afford one," replied Bob. "Like everything else new, the first models will probably be pretty spendy, but eventually everyone in the Republic will be able to afford

at least some simple, basic model, just like most people were able to afford the Model T when Henry Ford first made it, and most Germans could afford the VW bug when the Führer first ordered it made. But to answer your question, yes, that's a levitation-capable Heep, one of the first prototypes. It's Tom's, actually. BOSS gets first call on all the new stuff, like Wilkerson guns. Us common or garden variety coppers are getting a few next month. We came up here from town, but we haven't been able to do much flying. Had to drive all the way down here once we left the Missoula city limits. Only the major highways have been re-laid with the magneto strips so far, and very few of the smaller towns like Anaconda. At least not yet."

"Here comes Uncle Jace," she said, pointing to a tall man walking down an elevated plank walkway toward them. It was Jason Stockdale, who was still Chancellor of the University of Montana more than three decades after the revolution, and was thereby nominally in charge of the whole dig. "So have you guys ever been out here before?" she asked while they waited for him.

"Nope, first time for both of us," said Campbell. "Tom and I are going to be running point on the security aspect of this visitation of foreign eggheads. No offense, honey."

"None taken," said Allura with a merry laugh. "I *am* an egghead."

"Anyway, we figured we needed to familiarize ourselves with the site. Can you give us the grand tour?"

"I think Uncle Jace probably wants to do that himself," said Allura.

Jason Stockdale walked up to them. The boardwalk was one of a network that had been erected criss-crossing the site, to allow the diggers quick and easy access to various points without causing undue disturbance to the earth. Now in his sixtieth year, Stockdale was a vigorous man who still had a little more auburn than gray in his hair and beard. Today he was wearing jeans made in Pocatello, boots made in Spokane, a jacket manufactured in Seattle, a denim shirt from a family enterprise in Portland, a leather cowboy-style string tie hand-made by his daughter for his birthday many years before, and a traditional Party fedora from Olympia. On his jacket lapel he wore a button, the blue, white and green roundel of the Old NVA Association. He shook hands

with Campbell and Horakova, who were in turn wearing the Seven Weeks' War ribbon over their left front jacket pockets. It was accepted practice in the NAR that three decorations specifically could be worn out of uniform with casual dress. Tom Horakova wore the third of these, the red, black and white Iron Cross ribbon he had won along with his father Eli, when they had saved a Bluelight unit from capture by an American Special Forces team at one of the forward positions out along the Border Highway. Bob Campbell had been offered the Iron Cross for his role in Operation Belladonna, but had declined it. He hadn't wanted Ally to grow up seeing him wearing a medal for an operation in which her mother had died.

"Bob, Tom, welcome to Lost Creek," Jason said. "I have to admit, despite the fact that I have no actual role in the excavation itself and I just handle the paperwork and the money, the work Ally and her classmates are doing up here fascinates me so much that I've fallen into the habit of spending as much time up here as I can spare away from the campus."

"Is Jenny with you?" asked Bob.

"Not today," replied Stockdale. "She's back in town ferrying assorted grandchildren around to swimming, the rifle range, and orchestra practice. Oh, Ally, she's got young Clancy today as well."

"Yes, I know, Bobby told me he was coming out today and leaving little C with Jenny," said Allura. "He's over there digging." Allura was married to Bob Campbell's son Bobby Three, and mother to Clancy Campbell, aged four. Bobby Three had followed his father into the Guards, but tended to spend his days off out here in the woods helping his wife dig up dead things. In most extended Northwest families, children ended up being raised and cared for not just by biological parents alone, and certainly not by hired brown nannies, but by a wide range of uncles, aunts, grandparents, cousins, family friends, and neighbors. It was not the village that Hillary Clinton had in mind when she wrote her idiotic book, but it certainly filled the bill. "Jenny comes out here whenever she can, though," Jason went on. "She's always been a Solutrean fan."

"Bob and Tom said they want the grand tour," Allura told Jason.

"Sure, that's my favorite part of every new visit!" said Stockdale. "Follow me on up to the Shack first, then I'll show you around the site itself."

The Shack was a large pre-fab building set in a stand of pines, up on a rise about a hundred yards away. A lean 60-foot Tesla tower had been erected behind it to draw electric power for the site, although there were also backup ground generators in another prefab structure farther to the rear, in case the tower malfunctioned or was struck by lightning, as happened on occasion. The Shack contained workrooms, a small kitchen and dining area, two attached bunkhouses for overnighting male and female personnel, shower facilities, a couple of offices, and a series of glass display cases containing some of the more interesting and significant finds made thus far at the site. There were hand tools, needles and other implements made from bone, elk horn, and mammoth ivory, as well as a number of the distinctive flat, thin, leaf-shaped Solutrean-style spear points, arrowheads, and blades. These were the most important harvest of the Lost Creek site thus far, artifacts that had a proven origin in northern Europe, yet which were now being dug out of the ground in Montana.

These spear and arrow points were archaeological anomalies, because they indicated a connection between early man in Europe and North America that in accepted, politically correct scientific dogma, wasn't supposed to exist. According to established science, history, and "enlightened" liberal thought, Lost Creek itself wasn't supposed to exist. Meticulous and faultless Carbon-14 dating by the chemistry department at UM, which could not possibly be challenged even by the most puerile and fanatical of liberal or Jewish flacks, demonstrated quite clearly that the age of the ruins, the artifacts, and human remains found at the few Level One strata which had been excavated so far dated to approximately 9,800 radio-carbon years of age, roughly 11,000 calendar years.

To add further to the potential embarrassment of the world scientific community, the skulls of some of the site's former occupants, photographs of which were also on display in the Shack, were a liberal's nightmare even worse than the ancient Caucasian skeletons that had been found, because eight of them from the burial tumuli on the northern edge of

the site were the only definitive Cro-Magnon remains ever discovered in North America. "Or at least the only ones anyone has ever admitted to finding in North America," remarked Chancellor Stockdale as he was showing that case of exhibits. The bones were those of tall men and women with strong musculature; there was not a thick-skulled, low-browed Neanderthal or runty Siberian Asian anywhere in sight at Lost Creek. The frontal plumb of the skulls was straight, with small brow ridges, tall foreheads, and prominent chins. Both computerized and clay facial reconstruction of the skulls showed men and women with long faces, deepset eyes, aquiline noses, thin lips, and straight hair that residual DNA testing indicated to have been blond or red in color. Their mitochondrial DNA was Haplogroup N, which connected these early Montana settlers in a straight line with the main Cro-Magnon migration from the Black Sea area 24,000 years previously. No one had any idea on earth how they got to Lost Creek, but gotten there they had.

This was, of course, purest heresy anywhere outside the Northwest Republic, and controversy was already raging in the academic world about the Lost Creek anomalies. Heated controversy, in fact, including hysterical demands from prominent establishment figures in the liberal democracies that the American or East Canadian governments "do something" about it. In point of fact, the authorities had been concerned even before the impending visit of the distinguished foreign experts that some covert attempt from outside the country might be made to damage or compromise the dig site or the artifacts being discovered there, and they were already taking quiet steps to protect the site and the integrity of the excavation. Many of Guardsman Bobby Campbell's days off he spent out at the site weren't really days off, and many of the volunteer laborers on the site were also "off duty" Guards. Allura knew, of course, but she didn't worry about it and made sure she always got a full day's work out of her husband. "So how was the site discovered?" asked Bob Campbell.

"During the war, just before they got surrounded down in Anaconda, the Americans buried a large cache of artillery shells about half a mile from here, which they no longer had the cannon or the tanks to fire," Jason told them. "Two years ago some Labor Service kids working for

Fish and Wildlife accidentally stumbled across these shells when part of the creek bank collapsed and exposed the boxes. Fish and Wildlife called in the NDF, who removed the ordnance and blew it up in a big-ass controlled explosion, but they figured they'd better check out the area and see if our late unpleasant visitors left us any more surprises. They went over this stretch of woods with metal detectors and subsurface sonar, and they detected the walls of the longhouse and the tumuli in the burial ground, about six feet down, as well as the fact that the mound has hollow chambers inside with as yet unknown content. One of the army officers had sense enough to realize he'd found something, so he toddled on down to Missoula to show Arne Wingard his screen shots of the readings, and we took it from there."

"Who?" asked Tom.

"Doctor Arne Wingard, head of the archaeology department," said Allura. "My boss, the guy who is actually in charge of the project. He's down on the site. You'll meet him in a bit."

The main feature of the Shack was a large picture window, through which visitors could view the entire dozen-acre site from the hill. Over the past two years, archaeologists and students from the University of Montana at Missoula had cleared a large patch into the whispering pine forest, on a slight rise above the trickling brown stream that gave the site its name. It was now as active as an ant farm under the afternoon sun, with over fifty students, supervising scholars and staff digging with shovels, or in some cases carefully scraping away with trowels at lumps that might or might not be artifacts. Others trundled the excavated dirt away in wheelbarrows to a special ramp where it was tipped into dump trucks to be hauled away to the university, where the earth would be filtered one last time in case the seekers had missed anything. Looking down at the site, Campbell and Horakova could see long grids cut into the soil and smaller ones pegged out with twine and metal stakes, an arrangement that divided the whole site up into a grid pattern in which each section was about one meter square, so there would be a clear record of what was found where. Surveying and marking the excavation area into grids like this, once the surface detritus was cleared away, was always the first step in preparing any dig site, and it generally took a

long time. This was where the nation's universities with scores of eager young students came in very handy.

"We think that was the actual village area," said Ally, pointing to the center of the acreage where a large rectangular scar had been cut into the earth.

"Village?" said Campbell.

"Well, I supposed it might better be called a big farmstead," said Ally. "We've found postholes and petrified wood slivers from a stockade of almost three acres that surrounded the site at one time, but the ruins are all centered within that area, so there were probably gardens and small grazing plots for livestock surrounding the structures, if they'd gotten around to domesticating animals in those days, which we're not sure of. We've found skeletal remains of dogs, not wolves, which may have been domesticated by then, and we've found the bones of pigs and turkeys and pigeons, but there's no way to tell if they were domesticated or if they were hunted in the wild. There's the longhouse and about eight other smaller buildings we're working on now, but some of the other structures were probably barns, workshops, granaries, and other storage facilities. Most of the people themselves probably lived in the longhouse."

"How many lived here, do you think?" asked Tom Horakova.

"During which era?" asked Ally. "There are multiple artifact-bearing strata which seem to indicate that the site was inhabited off and on over a period of several thousand years. We figure Lost Creek must have been bigger and deeper back then, and so it was a convenient water source that kept people coming back." She pointed down toward the site. "For example, that big hole down there is definitely the remains of a longhouse, but it's only on Level Three, which puts it during the Neolithic period, about six thousand years ago. We need to see what's underneath it, down at Level One, which judging from the rock and soil strata comes in at around the very end of the Paleolithic."

"That's where you found the Caucasian skeletons? Meaning there were unexplained white people in North America as recently as six thousand years ago?" asked Tom.

"We actually found the skeletal remains in the tumuli, over there, which were contemporary with the beginning of Semitic civilization in the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, so yes," said Ally.

"I'll bet the big lefty nabobs at the Harvard and Columbia anthropology departments really groove on that tune," chuckled Jason.

"But you were asking how many people lived here, Uncle Bob? We don't know for sure, but the long house is eighty feet by thirty, the biggest Neolithic structure ever found. So say, twenty or thirty families? That's just a guess, but a fairly educated one. We haven't gotten down to Level One below the main area yet, except in a few of the trenches, and that will present the most exciting possibilities of all. That's one of the gifts we're waiting until our guests get here to unwrap, so they can monitor the whole process from the beginning and testify that we're not cheating or seeding the site or messing around in any way to try and prove our race was here first. Plus, of course, there's the mound itself." She pointed to the right to where a previously wooded hill stood, carefully stripped of all its trees and major impedimenta, awaiting the first shovel. A crew of students stood on top of the mound taking more underground sonar readings. "We haven't even stuck a single trowel in there. We're waiting for the Eminent Persons Delegation to start on that, so that they can observe and hopefully participate."

"You know that our visitors will be forbidden to do that, Ally," Jason reminded her. "Their respective governments insist on a strict no-hands-on stipulation in the agreement by which their travel permits to the Republic were issued. If the foreign experts actually participate in any way in the dig, then that might be construed as collaboration and recognition of UM as an institution of learning and of ourselves as fellow scholars, and that cannot and must not be. We're all fascist thugs, remember. We are beyond the pale."

"One does one's best," chortled Tom Horakova.

"Yes, I know all about the looky-loo-only terms, Mr. Chancellor," said Ally. "But once we get into that mound, knowing what the earth-penetrating sonar tells us we're going to discover, I find it very difficult to believe that truly dedicated scientists like Doctor Haskins and Professor Martineau from the Sorbonne will be able to resist picking up the odd trowel and digging in. When they understand what we've found here, they won't be able to help themselves."

"And what exactly *have* you found here, Ally?" asked Tom. "Sorry, I just got off the blower with Olympia and they did give me a briefing, but I'd like to hear you fill me in."

"Me, too," said Bob Campbell. "Oh, my kids got the Solutrean thing in school, of course, just like everybody in the Republic, but what exactly makes Lost Creek so special?"

"Two things of major importance so far," said Allura. "First off, there's the Cro-Magnon-style tumulus burials, which archaeologically speaking is about like finding a London double-decker bus a thousand miles out and two miles under the Pacific Ocean. They're just plain *not supposed to be here,* and in the absence of any other explanation I think some of us are almost ready to listen to space alien theories. I'm sure you've heard of Kennewick Man?"

"Oh, yeah," said Bob. "A prehistoric white man who inconsiderately showed up in Kennewick, Washington, back in the 1990s, with a very embarrassing carbon dating that showed he was around before the Indians. Got all the redskins' noses out of joint."

"Not to mention the noses of the politically correct academic and scientific establishment of the day," put in Jason Stockdale. "When Kennewick Man came along the lefty-libs of academe suddenly announced, based on no evidence whatsoever, that the Indians marched over here across the land bridge from Siberia a good forty thousand years ago. By just picking a figure out of their bumpus like that, they'd make damned good and *sure* their redskin protegés got here before any annoying whiteboys like KM. Forty thousand years sounds like a nice round number, until one realizes that there is not one jot of anthropological evidence for the existence of Indians as such in America before about eight thousand or so years ago, and even then the evidence isn't conclusive as to their racial makeup.

"Even the oldest of the Anasazi pueblos in Arizona and New Mexico are only about three thousand years old, and they're amazingly bare of any really old human remains, which is very strange indeed when you consider how many people must have lived in those things. Sure, they've found Indian skeletons in the Southwest pueblos, including bones that bear signs of violent death and cannibalism, but very recent in archaeological terms. Almost like the Indians moved into structures

that were already erected by somebody else many centuries before. All of America is like that. No Indian skulls, no bones, no burial sites going back more than a few millennia. No settlements or camp sites found, no Neolithic latrines so we can get DNA from coprolites, nothing, zip, zilch, nada. True, there are beaucoup Clovis and Folsom points found all over North America, dating back almost thirteen and a half thousand years, but who made them? There are no indication at all of where the makers of those artifacts came from, or who they were. They may even have been Neanderthal, for all anybody really knows. Or they may have been Kennewick Man's uncles and cousins. The important thing to realize is that not only was KM here nine thousand years ago, he was almost certainly here *first*, and that is what is blew minds in the groves of academe around the world."

"Well, we're pretty sure we've found Kennewick Man's relations here, as recently as Level Three, but also at Level Two, which was about nine thousand years ago and contemporary with KM," Allura informed them. "We've proven that he wasn't just some kind of bizarre fluke dropped out of the sky by a UFO. There were others like him, and along with the Cro-Magnon remains from the Level One tumuli, the world scientific community has been thrown for a loop. That's just plain not supposed to be, by the standards of accepted prehistory. But not only do we have Cro-Magnons here in North America, we have apparently modern Caucasian people inhabiting the same site thousands of years later. The question about KM was never that he was white—the initial anthropological and scientific testing of the skeletal remains before political correctness got involved was conclusive that he was, and the United States government never did allow any DNA testing before the remains disappeared. But how did he get there? Where were the rest of his people, and what happened to them? Was there some kind of mutation or evolution down from the Cro-Magnons, who actually had brains larger than our own? We think we may be able to finally answer some of those questions here at Lost Creek, because we haven't found just a few bone fragments and a partial skull like KM or the Spirit Cave mummy, we've found over three dozen from various epochs and probably more to come, not to mention what's in the mound. Those *have* to be burial chambers on that schematic! Add

to that what's left of several large farmsteads or small villages down through the centuries before men were even supposed to be erecting structures for shelter, when scientific orthodoxy has us all wandering the African savannah like baboons or living in caves. As I said, this site went through several periods of habitation. Already the things we've discovered are incredible."

"But the problem is that no one will believe any of the answers we find," said Jason. "Remember, we're wicked and horrible and violent racist criminals who were so naughty as to defeat the mighty and wonderful United States of America, for which we can never be forgiven. We are incapable of producing anything of worth, and if by some chance we *should* come up with incontrovertible evidence that white people were present in North America prior to the Indians, then of course it's all a lie and evil Nazi propaganda. No one in the outside world will be allowed even to hear of it. If they do, then any suggestion that the Lost Creek evidence be examined fairly and judged according to its actual merits will be shouted down. Anyone attempting to conduct a serious and unbiased debate on the Solutrean hypothesis will be arrested, probably tortured into recanting, and then buried alive for hatecrime. Liberal democracy has always manifested a violent aversion to the truth, especially when that truth contradicts their ideology. We've pretty much shredded their vile Holocaust myth—thank God—and they can't afford to lose another one, the legend of the brutal white conquistadors who brought nothing but whiskey and smallpox to the gentle and noble and defenseless little Indians who were here first."

"Like the heart-ripping Aztecs and the cannibal Pawnees and the turd-eating Karankawas," remarked Allura sarcastically.

"For which we were repaid with tobacco and syphilis," chuckled Tom. "Hey, the redskins got their licks in!"

"But do you really think you can get around all this by getting so-called legitimate scholars from other countries to sign off on your work here, Jason?" asked Bob Campbell. "I'm amazed you were even able to get any of these big muckety-muck academic egghead types to agree to come here at all, in view of the likely penalties if they do confirm the Lost Creek evidence, whatever that may turn out to be. They'll be committing professional suicide."

"Oh, they would never have come at all if their own governments hadn't given them the necessary permits," said Jason. "Remember, travel to the NAR is still illegal throughout almost all the Western world, and people who want to come here have to take flights to Russia or Ireland or Argentina and then transfer to Northwest Air, or else run the McCurtain, although that's pretty easy these days on the American border."

"Yeah, it's Aztlan that's the rough one," agreed Tom.

"So why did several Zionist-ruled countries, including East Canada, which is probably our worst enemy in the world, issue exit permits to let these experts come here and examine the site?" asked Bob.

"Clearly they expect their tame scientists to denounce Lost Creek as a Nazi propaganda hoax," Jason told them. "I think we need to expect that as well, frankly. But things may not go all their way. We've chosen the specific men and women we invited very carefully."

"We?" asked Bob.

"This is being done by the university in close consultation with the Political Bureau," said Jason. "They see long term advantage in confronting the Zionists with truth and forcing them to pervert or suppress it. Inevitably they will get caught doing so, and their immunity from accountability is by no means what it used to be since they have been shown to be distinctly vincible over the past two generations. Establishment history and science has screwed up time and again and been caught out at it, from the so-called Holocaust to Saddam Hussein's non-existent weapons of mass destruction, from the global warming hoax to the alleged equality of the races, things nobody really believes any more because the practical experience of our lives and simple common sense disprove it all. The object is to smash racial and political PC orthodoxy in the scientific and academic world by forcing it to trip over its own shoelaces, if you will pardon that rather strained metaphor."

"I assume that means you have invited scientists known or suspected to be racially inclined or sympathetic to the NAR," said Bob. "I know WPB analysts profile just about everybody who is anybody in any liberal democracy. But won't the Zionist régimes in Ottawa and Washington and London see right through that?"

"No, that's not exactly what we're doing," said Jason. "The eight top archaeologists and anthropologists whom we have selected aren't necessarily sympathetic to the NAR. As nearly as we can determine through careful study and analysis, these people are all either genuinely apolitical, or even slightly lefty-lib. But they all have reputations not only as top-flight people in their fields, whose opinions will be listened to, but also as objective and rational people who will either refuse as a matter of conscience to go along with their own government's plans to smear the Lost Creek find, or else who will make a public stink about the pressure to do so."

"This assumes that there are any Americans or Canadians or Europeans who *have* a conscience left," said Campbell sourly. "I was only Out There for a few months, and I sure don't remember meeting anyone with any principles. And that was twenty years ago. God knows what those people are like these days."

"Actually, things have improved somewhat in the area of public morals in the U.S.," said Tom. "When the United States government lost the last war and became too weak and underfinanced to maintain the Surveillance State, and the iron heel was lifted off people's necks to a large degree, a lot of the remaining white Americans cleaned up their act, including a lot of voluntary re-segregation, which has been allowed to happen because the Washington régime simply isn't strong enough to force people to mix any more. Once there was nobody forcing them to wallow in filth at metaphorical gunpoint, a lot of white Americans decided they didn't really like doing so. For example, American media entertainment is actually a lot cleaner these days than it was back before the war. White Americans, who despite everything still have more disposable income to buy advertisers' products than non-whites, simply stopped paying for perversion and degeneracy, and if they wanted to keep raking in the shekels the entertainment industry had to respond. Nowadays entire movies and television series are being made again where everybody keeps their clothes on. Remove the demand, the supply goes away."

"Of course, the Circus boys culling most of the Jews out of the media and entertainment industry didn't hurt," said Jason with a chuckle. "I get what you're saying, though, Tom. Sickness and degeneracy is not

a natural human condition, and you have to force it on white people. After almost a century of solid defeats, the United States is no longer in a position to force people to be bad, and left to themselves most white people will choose to live their lives in some approximation of a decency they seem to recognize instinctively. Come on, I'll show you around the site."

* * *

The Lost Creek dig consisted of three main sections or sub-sites. First, there was the longhouse and the clump of buildings around it, which Ally speculated had once been surrounded by a wooden palisade. "The walls of the Level Three structures are made from fairly goodsized local granite and limestone blocks on a foundation of gravel, carefully shaped with adzes or something similar so they could be fitted together without mortar," explained Ally. "There's some similarity to the Anasazi ruins, actually. The construction is really skillful, and we're not totally sure how they did it with only stone tools. The roofs were probably thatch, but we don't know for sure since only a few feet of wall still remain and we have no idea what they used as roof joists or rafters. Again I have to emphasize that this is the most recent stuff on the site, and it's six thousand years old. These people, whoever they were, were among the first in history to erect permanent free-standing structures for shelter. Maybe *the* first. Even the oldest Mesopotamian ziggurats are only five thousand years old."

"I didn't know Mesopotamians smoked ziggurats," quipped Tom Horakova.

Ally glared. "Nobody likes a smart-ass secret policeman!"

"Sorry, honey, this is all just a little overwhelming for me," he apologized with a chuckle. "I've spent the past week listening to audio surveillance of a Pentecostal preacher seducing one of his choir singers, which no one gives a damn about, so long as he's not the one slipping those stupid little Christian Zionist comic books into nooks and crannies all over Missoula."

"You're really worried about little subversive printed things?" asked Ally.

"That was how the Party got started," he reminded her.

On the extreme northern edge of the area were six tumulus burial chambers made of fitted shale and limestone believed to have been brought to the location from the far-off banks of the Missouri River, probably dragged on sledges or travois. They had been built in the unusual manner known as the D-barrow, with one façade straight and carefully lined. It was believed that the original builders had covered the stone burial chambers with earth. All six had been very carefully exposed and opened by the archaeologists; it was in these that the Cro-Magnon remains and artifacts had been discovered, with two of the tumuli containing two skeletons each, male and female. Finally, about a hundred yards to the east of the old stockade line was the large mound that sonar indicated contained several hollowed-out chambers; Ally speculated that when uncovered there might be found beneath the earth something similar to the weird Newgrange monument in Ireland—except that core samples which had brought up minute ancient pieces of wood and bone indicated this mound was almost twelve thousand years old. "If it contains more Cro-Magnon artifacts and remains, that will be stupendous," said Ally. "For one thing, most anthropologists believe they died out about twenty thousand years ago, and now we're finding that not only were they here in North America, but they appear to have survived longer here than they did in Europe. However, if the mound contains actual Caucasian *homo sapiens* remains, that will be downright earth-shaking. It will mean that white people were in fact *contemporary* with Cro-Magnon man, at least in this one small bit of time and place, and not the result of interbreeding between C-M and Neanderthal. That's the official theory, you know, that modern men of all races are CM-Neanderthal hybrids, a mixture of two species, both of whom managed to evolve in Africa over hundreds of thousands of years without leaving any trace of the fact there. Then about 20,000 years ago, or maybe 30,000, they're really vague on that, both species suddenly marched all around through Asia Minor, ended up in Europe, and *then* started interbreeding like good little race-mixers."

Tom laughed. "I'm no anthropologist, but even I can tell that's absurd!"

"Of course it's absurd!" giggled Allura. "But it's the best that politically correct science can come up with to maintain this article of liberal faith that mankind evolved in Africa, while explaining away the fact that there are no ancient *homo sapiens* remains to be found in Africa. They found a few very primitive hominids, but no evidence of any kind as to how those hominids became modern human beings. All the evidence of early human biological and cultural development is to be found in Europe and the Fertile Crescent of the Middle East, and that appears to have migrated from the east, Siberia and central Asia, and *not* Africa. But for any academic or anthropologist or historian in any of the democracies to say so risks professional ruin, physical assault by Jewish and left-wing students and thugs, and possible criminal prosecution for hatecrime. Every couple of years some university professor who thinks his tenure will protect him gets a Galileo complex and he questions or refutes some politically correct tenet regarding the biological or historical origin of man, and he ends up in the academic equivalent of the bottom of the river with his feet in concrete."

"But if none of that politically correct drivel is true, then where *did* we come from?" asked Bob Campbell.

"That's what we may be about to find out here," said Jason soberly. "Come on, I'll show you the rest of the site."

They found Dr. Arne Wingard and several of his top students carefully removing soil sections from an enlarged trench in the ground about thirty feet past the north wall of the longhouse, using an instrument that looked like a motorized posthole digger. He was a thin man in his late fifties, a Norwegian who had been educated in Britain before he fled to the Homeland one step ahead of a hatecrime charge for denying that there had been negro Vikings. He spoke English with a British accent. "Good afternoon, Mr. Chancellor," he said from down in the hole.

"What are you digging up there, Arne?" asked Jason Stockdale.

"Shit!" said Wingard happily.

"I beg your pardon?" said Campbell.

"There is a lady present, doctor," said Tom Horakova, frowning.

"No, you don't understand," said Ally, laughing. "That really *is* what he's digging up. This is a Neolithic latrine containing coprolite, which is petrified excremental matter."

"Coprolite is archaeological gold, gentlemen," said Wingard, climbing out of the hole and taking off his gloves to shake hands with the visitors. "Especially the human material. From it we can find out a very great deal about the people who left such deposits. What they ate and how much, what parasites and in some cases what diseases they were suffering from, and sometimes we can even get DNA samples that identify each, uh, depositor, which will give us a good idea of how many people were living here generation by generation if the pit was used for a long time, as this one apparently was. Plus the artifacts, of course. In those days, as in this, people sometimes tended to drop things accidentally or throw items they wanted to get rid of down the khazi. So far we've found a bone knife handle that judging from the hafting groove in it once contained a Solutrean flint blade, several bone needles, broken bits and pieces of wood that appear to have been part of tools, and our prize find of last week, a small stone hammer head that appeared to be grooved on both sides so it could be fitted with a handle. Plus of course we found animal bones, hundreds of them, the remnants of many a meal. We've found wildfowl, buffalo, deer, elk, rabbit and squirrel. We also know Lost Creek Man ate a lot of fish, which indicates that in those days either Lost Creek must have been a lot wider and deeper, or else they mounted fishing expeditions to nearby lakes, or both. That means they must have had some method of catching large numbers of them, which implies nets and teamwork, maybe even rafts or boats. We also found a piece of slate which was grooved for hafting, which I will swear on a stack of whatever volume you care to name is a *plowshare*. It's too large to be anything else. I can't prove it yet, but I am convinced that these people were practicing primitive agriculture."

"Oh, pardon me, I should have introduced our two guests," said Stockdale. "This is Colonel Robert Campbell of the CID and Captain Tom Horakova from BOSS. They're going to be making sure our coming visit from the outside world goes smoothly."

"You mean you're going to make sure that none of our colleagues from the so-called democracies is a spy and a saboteur sent here to

contaminate and discredit this site," replied Wingard with a scowl. "You've got your work cut out for you, then, gentlemen."

"You don't trust your fellow scholars?" asked Campbell.

"Good God, of course not! No farther than I could throw them!" exclaimed Wingard. "As far as intrigue and internal politics goes, the average university in Europe or America could give lessons to the Borgias! None of the Zionist governments will need to look far to find willing tools to do their dirty work for them. Academia is just like everything else under democracy, gentlemen. It's all about *money*. Research grants, fellowships, tenured professorships, prizes, government and private sector contracts and consulting fees, an endless torrent of boodle flowing down the corridors of academe for those who are willing to sell their integrity and their souls for a bit of it and sing whatever tune their political masters call. There are men and women in the academic and scientific world, gentlemen, many of them, who have made good livings their entire lives and acquired respect and renown by maintaining and advocating theories and bodies of alleged truth and knowledge which are in fact pure politically correct poppycock. There were thousands of so-called scientists who ate millions of steak dinners for decades off the so-called scientific fact that the earth was growing warmer due to human activity consequent to capitalism, and the only way to quote-unquote 'save the planet' was to institute one-world socialist government. What gets me is that they were able to keep it up for almost a generation after mean global temperatures began to decline again in 1998.

"Lost Creek doesn't just represent a political or intellectual embarrassment to the world scientific and academic establishment, gentlemen," Wingard concluded, shaking his head. "Lost Creek threatens their very bread and butter. They will do anything to destroy this site and every jot of evidence of the past we have discovered here, and frankly I doubt it will even require foreign intelligence services to get them to do it. You need to watch every one of our distinguished visitors like hawks. I know I will be."

"Unless he happens to be Scorpius himself," Horakova whispered so low that Bob Campbell could barely hear him.

XXIII

Scorpion In The Woodpile

(32 years, seven months after Longview)

Oh, what a tangled web we weave, when first we practice to deceive.
—Sir Walter Scott

Later on that night, back in Missoula, Colonel Bob Campbell sat in his office in the Civil Guard headquarters with BOSS Captain Tom Horakova. "When do they arrive, again?" asked Bob.

"A week from tomorrow," replied Horakova. "They'll be flying in by private charter jet from Minneapolis."

"Not taking the scenic route and driving overland, are they?" asked Bob.

"No," replied Tom. "That route might be a little too scenic for their taste. I suspect that their superiors don't want them to notice the fact that the old barbed wire entanglements and the crumbling Bremer walls and the pre-war minefields were all on the American side of the McCurtain. I wish they *would* drive. Their flying is going to be a nuisance. It means we're going to have to vet the plane crew to make sure they don't try this nonsense of sneaking in a mulatto or a gook, and then once they're in the country we'll have to put tails on them as well, plus all ten members of the Eminent Persons delegation. Jack Smith Airport is going to have to stock up on petroleum-based U.S. aviation fuel to gas up that lumbering dinosaur of a private jet they'll be arriving in. This is the biggest operation I've ever been involved in, and BOSS doesn't have the manpower in Montana. Each of these subjects has to have at

least two full-time minders to work in shifts. We're having to bring in more agents from Spokane and Calgary. I wish to hell BOSS *was* this big huge secret police octopus the Office of Northwest Recovery says we are. In real life, we're hard put to keep track of a group of less than a dozen people."

"Maybe we can inveigle them into some kind of conference in Seattle or Vancouver or Portland, and then they can get a leisurely ride in a nice comfortable airship," suggested Campbell. "The only way to fly. Or at least we need to get hold of a levi-bus and run them up to Spokane on some pretext, so we can show off the world's only gravitational transportation system."

"This isn't a propaganda tour," warned Tom. "We don't want to give them the idea that we're showing them Potemkin villages. We know they're in Washington, D.C. now, and they're being given some kind of briefing or orientation by the government and the Office of Northwest Recovery. God only knows what they're expecting to find when they get here."

"Nigger heads on spikes over the Missoula city gates," suggested Bob. "Seriously, if you're short-handed, CID does have undercover detectives, you know. There's *some* crime in the Republic, and us coppers haven't totally forgotten how to do these things."

"Thanks, Bob. I'll probably take you up on that."

"So how *do* we ride herd on them once they're on the ground in the Republic?" asked Campbell.

"Very carefully," said the younger man. "The ONR is probably telling them that BOSS will be spying on them all the time, which is going to make it difficult for us to spy on them at all. Normally we would step back and just let the experience of a free White country work its magic, as it almost always does with visitors of any kind, but in this present situation we have to watch them, in case one of them tries to contact Scorpius. But for that very reason, we don't want them feeling paranoid."

"Are we even sure any of them *will* try to contact Scorpius?" asked Bob.

"No, but it makes sense to assume that the ONR would slip a ringer into the delegation with at least a watching brief to observe, and

almost certainly to act if there is any way he or she can see to damage or discredit the Lost Creek site," replied Tom. "Some kind of tampering with the artifacts or remains or contamination of the site itself which would indicate fraud on our part, or invalidate our conclusions, or else simply make it impossible to correctly examine or analyze whatever is found in the mound or beneath the longhouse. Or something to embarrass the Republic politically and call the results into question."

"Any idea which one of them it might be?" asked Bob.

"Most likely one of the personal assistants," said Tom. "The academics themselves all have publicly traceable antecedents, and none of them seems to have been involved in anything political, apart from the usual burning of occasional pinches of incense on the altar of the gods of liberalism and diversity. There's some of that with all of them, but you can't get anywhere in the academic world Out There without a little toadying to the Jews. It's a survival skill."

"But by the same token, has any of them demonstrated any sign of independent thought or genuine intellectual curiosity, never mind integrity?" asked Campbell.

"There's the odd hint," replied Tom, leafing through the old-fashioned paper file folder. The Republic's security and police services were still leery of computers even thirty years on, and did things the old-fashioned way with paper and pen wherever possible. "Several of them have publicly disputed the theories and work of Jewish colleagues, although never over anything politically or racially sensitive. Professors and scientists who do so tend to end up in prison, or here in the Republic with us, like Dr. Wingard."

"Okay, let's go over our distinguished visitors individually," said Campbell. "There are five top scientists and academics, each with a personal assistant who ostensibly is either a graduate student or a junior colleague, right?"

"Correct," said Tom.

"They're all white, of course?"

"Yes, else they wouldn't have been invited to come to the Republic in the first place," said Horakova.

"But do we know for sure?" persisted Campbell.

"Yes, sir. One good thing Hunter Wallace's Surveillance State did accomplish, from our point of view, was the establishment of the FBI's nationwide DNA database. Although not all European countries have them yet, East Canada does, and both EC and the US take DNA samples from everyone entering the country at Customs. This information then goes to the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the RCMP, and sundry other databases, which the Circus can then hack. All of the members of the delegation check out as white, unless of course they're deliberately slipping a Jew or a wog of some kind on us through falsifying someone's DNA records. Spying is an incredibly devious game. You never know whether what you're looking at is real, or only what the other guy wants you to see."

"I remember," said Bob grimly.

"Yes, I know. One of the assistants, a woman named Bella Sutcliffe, seems to have had a Levantine great-grandfather."

"We're not running a marriage check for a prospective bride or groom," said Campbell. "But a Jewish great-grandfather is a little too close in time for my taste, and besides, you know the Constitutional bar to entry into the Republic."

"Race and Resettlement has issued waivers for visitors and even immigrants if the contaminated blood is that remote, for all the hollering by the purists in Parliament. And anyway, I didn't say Jew, I said Levantine," Tom reminded him. "These genetic tags don't actually have little Stars of David on them, you know. There are several other Armenoid peoples who leave the same chromosomal patterns and markers as Ashkenazi Jews. Remember, the Khazars were racially Armenioid, hence the typical camel-face associated with the species. Armenoids have always been heavy on that Neanderthal mix Ally was talking about. Some Armenians have as much as twenty-five percent Neanderthal DNA, just like some Jews, except the Armenian may come from a thousand years of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, hate Jews worse than sin, and he may have had a Dashnak grandfather who was a bandit in the hills who'd come into town and gun down Soviet commissars. Sephardic Jews are more often than not genetically identical to Arabs; an individual could have a hundred rabbis in his family tree and there would be no way to tell from his DNA. Genetics is helpful, but not

necessarily definitive. And yes, I know the Constitution, but you also know that in security cases we have a certain amount of discretion in getting the job done. If we make a beef about letting this Sutcliffe woman into the country, we'll risk tipping them off that we're really interested in this delegation, interested enough to hack into the enemy's databases to dig around. Besides, the poor woman may not even know she's got bad blood. Most Americans can't even name all four of their grandparents, if you don't count Grandpa and Mee-maw."

"Alright, we'll let it slide for expediency's sake, but we'll keep a wee extra bit of eye on Ms. Sutcliffe," said Bob. "Let's go down the list."

"First the British contingent," said Tom, riffling the papers in the file. "The big dog in the entire group is Frederick Haskins, PhD, from Oxford University in the U.K. Age 58, author of over twenty books on archaeology itself and various aspects of the Stone Age, generally considered to be the go-to guy for all things flinty and clubby. His assistant is Doctor Andrew Renfrew, a Scotsman, age thirty-two, a brilliant up-and-coming type in the archaeological world, whose claim to fame so far is excavating an entire lost Tudor village in Bumbleshire."

"That file doesn't actually say Bumbleshire, does it?" asked Bob. "If so, somebody's messing with you."

"No, that was me being silly. It was actually Staffordshire. Next the Canucks, Arnold Kellerman, PhD, from the University of Toronto. His personal assistant is another Brit, a woman, Doctor Letitia Haines."

"Sounds like some Miss Marple type in tweeds and sensible shoes, with a face like a Bassett hound," remarked Bob.

"No, actually she's pretty dishy," said Tom, handing her Ms. Haines' passport photo from the file.

"See what you mean. Next?"

"Professor René Martineau from the Sorbonne, accompanied by Madame Céline Martineau." Tom told him. "Husband and wife team, both in their forties, PhDs of course, both recognized as top experts on the cave paintings of France and Spain and the prehistoric Solutrean culture, most of the relics of which have been discovered in France. These two are make-or-break, since they are the official Solutrean

nabobs in the group. They are the ones whose thumbs up or down on the Lost Creek Solutrean artifacts will carry the weight."

"Next?" asked Bob.

"Next comes Doctor Alvin Fortis from the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. God, I'd love to see that place! You ever get to visit the Smithsonian when you were Out There?"

"I once spent a very bad night in a small upstairs room in one of their annexes surrounded by really crappy early American art," replied Bob shortly. "Who's this character's PA?"

"A young man named Ralph Tarricone, graduate student, some kind of intern at the Smithsonian. Since the Smithsonian is a political patronage job, then these two are most likely to be wrong 'uns, although maybe not, precisely because it *is* so obvious."

"Okay, that's four pair," said Campbell.

"Last but not least, Doctor Amanda Wyrick, head of the anthropology department at Harvard University. Her assistant is this Bella Sutcliffe woman, the one I mentioned with the hose-nose chromosomes a ways back. They've been together for a few years."

"What do you mean, 'together?' Crap, we're not talking about tribadism here, are we, Tom? Because you know if we detect any behavior like that, diplomatic immunity or not, I can't overlook it."

"No, rather the reverse," replied Horakova. "Both Dr. Wyrick and Ms. Sutcliffe seem to have a reputation around the Harvard campus as real man-eaters. The Wyrick woman seems to make a habit of marrying and then divorcing various male faculty members every couple of years. Men who are usually in a position to assist in her career. She's currently married to the president of Harvard, so not sure how much higher up that particular ladder she can climb. Ms. Sutcliffe likes to spend her days digging up ancient Mayan temples, and her nights under the mosquito netting with whatever lusty and sweaty male animals are available."

"Race-mixer?" asked Bob in distaste.

"Probably, but there's no proof, and she won't be finding any mestizos here to defile herself with."

"I still don't like it," grumbled Bob.

"Hey, you want to ban her from entering the country, you're the senior officer, Bob," said Tom.

"Horse shit. Thanks for being polite, Tommy, but we both know this is a BOSS gig. You say the Political Bureau vetted all the academics who were invited, and they seem to be straight up?"

"Hey, it could be worse. We invited over a hundred. These ten were the only ones who accepted and who could persuade their respective governments to give them permission to visit the NAR without facing legal action when they got back home."

"Why let any of them come at all?" wondered Bob. "And why these ten?"

"Obviously so the ONR or CSIS or MI6 or somebody could slip an agent in," said Tom. "Quite possibly more than one, unknown to the others. They *have* to do something about Lost Creek, sir. We've defeated them militarily and economically, so all they have left is their deranged ideology. If their whole version of human history turns out to be bunkum as well, the last foundation of liberalism will crumble. They can't let that happen. They *have* to maintain some kind of moral high ground over us."

"I'd say most likely our spy will be one of the secondary individuals," ruminated Campbell.

"One or more of them, but we can't discount any of them."

"How do you want to work this?" asked Bob.

"We don't want to follow them around like crude secret policemen, or at least we need to keep physical surveillance to a discreet minimum," said Horakova. "Like I said, we don't want our lad or lassie getting spooked. We want them to feel as safe as possible, so they will risk making contact with Scorpius. We go to town on the electronic monitoring. We wire up the whole Lost Creek site with hidden fiber-optic micro-sensors that can pick up both audio and visual. Same with their hotels and anywhere else they stay or hang out, any vehicles they ride in, any restaurants or bars they frequent. We hack their own implanted GPI chips as quick as we can detect their frequencies, so we know where they are all the time, their FLEC cards and credit cards and anything else that has a chip on it. Most of those frequencies we've already determined, courtesy of WPB's techs and hackers. We monitor their personal computers and phones and other devices, of course. We monitor and analyze every contact they have with any NAR resident or

citizen in case that person turns out to be the elusive Scorpius. Beyond that, we'll have to play it by ear."

"Right, now on to Scorpius himself," said Campbell. "Or herself, lest we forget. Has WPB come up with anything new?"

"Not so far," said Horakova. "The Circus has the home office in Olympia and the stations in D.C., Ottawa, and London prioritizing it, hacking away like mad into any database they can break into, searching for anything relevant. Our guys are rifling through government dumpsters, they're pulling black bag sneak-and-peeks into enemy homes and apartments, bugging as many of their people and offices as they can safely do, anything to get a line on Scorpius. All we have found so far is that one file the Olympia WPB guy turned up three weeks ago."

"And you say that was on a routine smash-and-grab into a randomly chosen ONR database?" asked Bob.

"Yeah, the kind of thing WPB cyber-whizzes do for recreation when it's a slow day at the office," replied Horakova with a nod. "There's a long technical description of the procedure in the file here, which I haven't even bothered to try and understand. Basically, our boy saw a crack in a door, kicked it in, and grabbed what he could before their firewalls and attack dogs hit back and fried his own computer to a crisp. As near as we can figure he was able to snatch the Scorpius file by pure accident. Unless of course the whole damned thing is an elaborate set-up, there *is* no Scorpius, and the ONR is now laughing and quaffing beers in joyful glee over the way they've got us chasing our tails."

"We have to assume it's legitimate," said Campbell morosely. "This is too important. Also important is the question of do they now know that *we* know?"

"Yes," said Horakova. "The kid's raid on the cookie jar triggered their cyber-defenses and counterattacked his own machine, like I said. They have to know what he took. The rest of the files he snatched are mostly routine political things relating to Congress and budget negotiations. They check out as legit. The Scorpius file is the only real hot potato. If it's a set-up, it's a neat one, but I don't think so. When the WPB section head decrypted the file and read it, you know what he found."

"A complete list of every artifact and item of human remains found at Lost Creek up until four days prior to the cyber-hack," said Campbell grimly. "A detailed map of the site with global coordinates, done on an unidentified software program, a list of every NAR individual working at Lost Creek or associated with the site, including my son and my daughter-in-law, and an assigned ONR code name for the source. Scorpius."

"Yeah," said Tom with a nod. "The WPB passed it on to General Capshaw over at BOSS. Capshaw went through the roof, he took it to the Security Minister and *he* went through the roof, and the rest, as they say is history. Here we are. Before you ask, yes, the list is one hundred percent accurate and up-to-date as of the day we think it was delivered to ONR. If our crustacean friend is somewhere on or connected to the site, as he must be in order to have all that info, then he was smart enough to list himself as well."

"Scorpions aren't crustaceans, they're arthropods," said Bob absently. "No idea at all how he or she is communicating with the ONR?"

"It could be any one of a dozen ways," replied Tom grimly. "The NAR is self-contained, but not completely isolated from the outside world. That's impossible. E-mail and internet connection from a personal computer inside the Republic to one outside the country isn't illegal, you just have to do it at your own risk, and you can't network with anyone else's computer, so whatever garbage you pick up Out There stays on your own machine and doesn't spread. People make phone calls all the time from here to all over the world; we just remind people fairly often that the enemy is listening to them gabbing with old Aunt Fanny in Poughkeepsie, and let it go at that. The U.S. Postal Service won't handle mail with NAR stamps, but you can even send good old-fashioned letters and packages back and forth by private courier services."

"Yeah, who charge an arm and a leg," groused Bob. "Okay, assuming it's not a gull, his handlers now know that we know about Scorpius. Surely they'll warn him or her, and advise against making any contact with anyone in the Eminent Persons Delegation?"

"Remember, they still have a mission to accomplish, to discredit Lost Creek at all costs as a Nazi hoax," warned Tom. "They may be

willing to sacrifice him for that purpose, or he may be willing to sacrifice himself, if he's ideologically as opposed to financially motivated."

"Mmmm. Who, exactly, is *they* in this case, do we think?" wondered Campbell aloud. "ONR itself? What I'm getting at is that I know different spook agencies have different styles and *modus operandi*, or would that be *modi operandum,* plural? I forget my high school Latin. But if we can figure who exactly is running this mission, we can better detect who is the asset."

"The French don't seem to give a damn about us all that much. We get routine condemnation as nasty garcons from their politicians in public but they leave it at that. Over four hundred French firms trade with the Republic on the sly through front corporations in Russia or Ireland. Could be MI6 or CSIS," continued Horakova. "Although I'd tend to discount the Brits. Despite its fearsome rep and all the James Bond caca from a hundred years ago, MI6 is mostly humintel, straight-up spies. The British use SAS or mercenaries when they want anything proactive done. Sabotaging an archaeological dig to save a bunch of eggheads' reputations might be considered beneath their dignity. CSIS, definitely. The Ottawa regime is still riddled with Jews, despite the inroads the Circus hunters make on them every year. They hate us to the point of insanity, even more so than most American politicians and bureaucrats. We need to pay special attention to the Canadian team when they arrive. But ONR isn't going to pass up something like this. If I had to guess, I'd say we may be looking at not one but two enemy agent provocateurs arriving in seven days, possibly—no, probably—working independently of one another."

"Beautiful!" said Bob with a grim sigh. "So how do we protect our people and our country and our history from whatever they're planning? Including Ally and Bobby and maybe Jason Stockdale as well?"

"The first thing we do is we see Jason, tomorrow, and we bring him completely up to speed, and not only as a courtesy because he's Chancellor," urged Tom. "Remember, we're talking a former NVA man here, one of the handful of people who won our freedom through shadow-fighting a lot like this. He can serve as the third man of our little Lost Creek troika. He has the necessary skill set."

"I agree," said Bob.

"Then we do everything we can to get ready, watch who needs to be watched, and see how it plays out," Tom went on. "Sometimes, after you've done all you can do, it's up to the enemy to make the next move, and you hope like hell you can catch him in the act and stop him. So far, we've always been able to stop them at the last minute."

"Yeah," sighed Bob, remembering. "So we have."

XXIV

The Living Record

(32 years, seven months and one day after Longview)

When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of thy memory.
—William Shakespeare—Sonnet LV

Prior to the Revolution, the Chancellors of the University of Montana lived for many years in a modest red brick ranch-style dwelling on the western edge of campus. Jason and Jenny Stockdale had brought that tradition to an end, not out of any desire for ostentation, but because their family of eight children had become too large for the old official residence. Some years before, Stockdale had transferred his and Jenny's growing brood to a large colonnaded two-story home on Fifth Street, his own property and bought without any university money with an interest-free NVA veteran's home loan. Their new house had a huge yard, many bedrooms, and there was Toole Park nearby for the children to run and play in. Stockdale then split the old Chancellor's residence into a double house, and now it was used as quarters for financially strapped married students on scholarships.

It was a sunny spring morning in May. Jenny Stockdale was 51 years old now but looked not a day over 40; the strands of silver in the honey brown of her hair seemed to sparkle rather than age her. She was clearing the table of the detritus from the huge breakfast she customarily served every day for her husband, the two children who remained at home, and frequent overnight guests, which included Stockdale

children and grandchildren as well as visitors on university business and old comrades from both wars.

The first of the eight Stockdale offspring was Jason Junior, who had arrived a year after Longview. The youngest was daughter Melanie, a pretty girl aged thirteen who resembled her mother at that age, named after the Revolutionary heroine Melanie Young, who Jenny had met once or twice in the NVA before she was killed at the Ravenhill ambush. Melanie Stockdale had just graduated from primary school, and she would be starting as a freshman at Samuel Johnson High School in the fall. Her older brother Whittaker, a tall and good-humored young man who'd been named after Whittaker Chambers in one of his father's impish moods, was sixteen years old and set to graduate from Sam Johnson in a few days. Like a hundred thousand other young men, he would begin his adult life by entering the National Labor Service in late June. The Republic had eliminated the whole middle school or junior high school concept as unnecessary, as well as the twelfth grade. The legal age of manhood and womanhood in the Republic was sixteen years, and thanks to a superb educational system and a stable, all-white society that taught responsibility and maturity from the cradle, at sixteen the youth of the Northwest *were* pretty much adults. These young people were living proof: the NAR way *worked*. America's way did not; the many states and municipalities in the fragmented remains of the United States had recently been forced to raise the legal voting and drinking and toking age to 25 years. All sexual age of consent laws in the U.S. had been abolished years before as being "impossible to enforce."

The two youngest kids were still in the dining room area, along with Chancellor Jason Stockdale and four-year-old Clancy Campbell, who was called Little C., as opposed to his septuagenarian great-grandfather Big C., who still lived in retirement out on Daly Avenue. Jenny dressed Little C. in shorts and a straw sun hat, then dispatched him out into the back yard to play off his breakfast with the dogs. Parents and grandparents in the NAR could do that—send their young children out into the yard and around the neighborhood to play, secure in the knowledge that they would not be seized and abducted by a pervert for sodomy, or murdered by a nigger gang who felt like killing something

white that day. Analysts from the Bureau of Race and Resettlement had reported that of the many factors which still drew tens of thousands of white immigrants to run the McCurtain every year in hope of getting into the Northwest Republic, this simple factor of a physically safe environment for children was the most psychologically important. In the mid-21st century, no other land in the world offered Caucasian people protection from casual infanticide by strangers.

"Not a word on my work assignment yet," Whittaker was saying.

"The NLS tries to keep young people close to home, unless they volunteer for a station assignment elsewhere," said Jason, still reading his morning newspaper, which was another thing the Republic had which no one else did any more. The last physical newspaper in the United States had vanished ten years before, and the last one in Europe only a year ago. "Consistent with the needs of the service and the national economy, of course. Some youngsters want to leave home at sixteen, and some don't. You can choose to live in the barracks even if you stay in Missoula, you know. Of course, it cuts both ways. Some parents want to boot their sixteen-year-olds out the door."

"I'll stick around here, if it's okay with you," said Whit with a smile. "How much will you rent me my room for?"

"Yes, with that first paycheck comes responsibility," agreed Jason judiciously. "Hmm, what do you think his room is worth, Jen? Fifty Cs a month?"

"Don't be silly," said Jenny briskly, coming in from the kitchen, out the back door of which she had just shooed little Clancy. "We're not going to charge our son rent in his own home while he does his national service. He'll be leaving home soon enough when he goes into the Luftwaffe."

"Well, what would you *like* to do, Whit?" asked Jason.

"I aced all my aptitude tests, especially the aircraft mechanics and engineering exams, which means that logically I should be put out to apprentice at the airport or the government motor pool, or hired out to a private contractor doing aerospace research for our new moon colony. I'd like something that will help me get into the Air Academy with a technical major after my first year in the Luftwaffe, because that's the fast track to space training, which means they'll probably stick me on

some kind of shovel detail," said Whittaker with rueful humor. "I don't mind digging in the dirt, but if that's what I'll be doing, I'm hoping that Ally can get me assigned out at Lost Creek, since you won't help."

"No can do," explained Jason patiently, yet again. "I told you, I cannot be seen to be intervening in my son's Labor Service commitment or trying to get you any special favors or assignments. I didn't for any of my other kids and I won't do it for Mel, so don't feel bad. That's the beginning of corruption, and it's wrong. Not to mention that NVA veteran or not, in my position as university chancellor, if the Party got wind of it I'd have the Control Commission on my neck. Senior Party people have to be above suspicion, like Caesar's wife."

"Ally says she's willing to have a word with the district administrator, and she's a Party member," Whit told him.

"Yes, well, nobody's going to say anything to Allura, since if it weren't for her mother none of us would be here and the entire nation owes her one big favor, but it's still the thin edge of the wedge," grumbled Jason, frowning. Like most older people grown ever more conservative as the years went by, he had his doubts about the younger generation and was seriously concerned they would end up screwing the pooch. There was little reason for this view in the Republic. The Northwest was raising a new generation of white men and women of a kind that had not been seen on the planet for two hundred years, but ageing revolutionary vets who remembered the bad old days were never quite convinced they would never come again, and so they were still prone to paranoia.

"I didn't know you were interested in archaeology, Whit," said Jenny.

"Well, not so much, but it would be a lot more interesting and fun than driving a garbage truck or planting seedlings a hundred miles out in the woods someplace," said her son.

"That's what the Labor Service is for," his father reminded him. "Someone in society has to do the manual labor. No matter how many robots we make and how well they function, there will always be jobs that can only be done by a man with a pick and a shovel and a strong back. Under ZOG they brought in millions of Mexicans and other Third Worlders to do the work that white people, especially white males, had

become too weak and lazy and unfocused to do. One of the things that nearly destroyed our race in those days was our unwillingness to get our hands dirty, literally. White men didn't want to stoop and dig and heft and tote and sweat and work out under the hot sun."

"And white women didn't want to change diapers or stay home and raise their own children," put in Jenny. "They wanted to wear yuppie Power Womyn suits and work in cubicles and have these wonderful fulfilling *careers* like they saw on television and heard about on Oprah. So Americans farmed both tasks out to mud people, letting in more and more of them until they almost drowned us."

"What's a yuppie?" asked Whittaker.

"What's an Oprah?" asked Melanie.

"Nothing important," Jenny told them. "Just some silly words for silly people, from a very sick and silly time."

"Why would any woman not want to care for her own children?" asked Melanie curiously. "I just can't imagine that."

"It wasn't just that they didn't want to care for the children, they didn't want to bring them into the world at all," Jenny told her.

"But if nobody has any babies, then how will the human race go on existing?" asked Melanie. "I mean, us, of course, not niggers and gooks."

"How could any race of people want their own kind to die out?" asked Whit in puzzlement. "I never did get that. Okay, yeah, we got History and Moral Philosophy classes at Sam Johnson, you have to in order to graduate, so I know all the standard explanations, but I still can't wrap my mind around what it must have been like actually to *live* on a daily basis in a society where your own people wanted you dead, and wanted to die themselves and hand over the world to monkeys. How could anyone hate themselves that bad? It's insane!"

"You got it, son," agreed his father. "It was just that. Literally insane. They were cuckoo for cocoa puffs."

"What's a cocoa puff?" asked Melanie.

"Just another word from the Dark Time, now meaningless," said Jason.

"Yeah, Dad, you always say that, and you never explain what those words did mean!" complained his daughter. "You guys remember those

days. You could probably do a lot better teaching the H&MP course than Mr. Ballard."

"Not necessarily," said Jason. "Paul Ballard was too young for the NVA, but I happen to know he had a sterling combat record during the Seven Weeks, he's a first class citizen and a Party member, and I consider him eminently qualified to teach H&MP."

"But he doesn't actually remember anything before the Revolution himself. He was three years old on the day Coeur d'Alene went up. I know you guys don't like to talk about it, but why not?" persisted Whittaker. "You talk about the Dark Time like it was ancient history, and I suppose since it all happened before Mel and me were born, to us it *is* ancient history, but we're talking less than forty years since the Sixteen Days in Coeur d'Alene. How can you explain an entire race of people deciding that it not only deserved to die, but bringing in whole other races of savages to kill them and then worshipping their own destroyers like gods? At least that sounds like what happened, from what I learned in school and what I've read for myself."

"Not a bad description of it," agreed Jason with a nod.

"Is it?" asked Whittaker. "I wouldn't know, but you guys would. You actually saw it happen. Mr. Ballard didn't."

"We don't talk much about the Dark Time because nothing we could say about it is very nice," explained Jenny. "We always took the same attitude with you two kids that we took with your brothers and sisters, and that was that your father and I spent our own youth doing horrible things so that you would never have to understand why we did them."

"You know the old saying about those who can't remember the mistakes of the past being doomed to repeat them?" asked Whittaker.

"Yes, dear, but today we have created a whole new society specifically designed to avoid repeating those mistakes, so you won't have to worry about it," replied Jenny.

"You might say we've tried to build an idiot-proofed society," said Jason. "There have only been two such attempts made in history, one in Germany in the last century which the kikes were able to destroy, and now here in the Northwest, which the Jews keep trying to destroy but haven't succeeded yet."

"So what *was* it really like?" persisted Whittaker. "Back then?"

"I can't imagine going to school with those things," said Melanie. "I've never seen a real nigger, only in pictures."

"Lucky you! That was kind of the idea behind the Revolution, sweetie, so you wouldn't ever have to see one." said Jenny.

"What do they smell like?" asked Melanie, curious.

"About like you'd expect from their pictures," said Jason. "Why do you want to know, anyway, son? It's not like your mom and I have any really big secrets you can't learn in school or in the Montana War Museum. What do you think we've left out? All your lives you've seen your mother and me in our uniforms and marching with the Old Fighters in the parade every Independence Day. You know we were Volunteers, and then we were in the Battle of Portland, and then during the Seven Weeks War I was on General Drones' staff and spent most of my time riding around in a Heep doing basic housekeeping jobs and keeping A.J. from being buried alive in pieces of paper so he could fight the war. I wasn't any big hero, although in point of fact you know some real ones."

"Who?" asked Whittaker.

"You've met a lot of our friends from that earlier time in our lives who did a lot more than we did, including President Morgan, and General Randall and his wife Erica, and General Drones, on down to old Pete the caretaker down at Sam Johnson High. And from the Seven Weeks, you know your Uncle Tommy who won the Iron Cross with his dad, and your Uncle Bob, who was offered Iron but is a genuinely modest man as well as a brave one, so he turned it down. Plus Jace and Katie are old enough to remember going on that long camping trip with your mom during the Seven Weeks, although Annabel doesn't remember anything since she was just a baby."

"Jace and Katie used to talk about the long summer at the lake and the funny noises coming from the sky, yeah," confirmed Whit. "Although it didn't make much sense to Mel and me growing up."

"We thought ZOG was this big monster," said Melanie.

"It was, honey. Anyway, I need to get going," said Jason, rising from the table and folding his newspaper. "Bob and Tom want to meet with

me about something concerning the Lost Creek excavation. You're out with the Pioneers this weekend, right, Whit?"

"Yes, sir," replied Whittaker. "Three days camp up at Glacier Lake. I don't see why they won't let us go right into the service for four years instead of two, or at least do it first. This way I'll forget all my military training by the time I get into the Luftwaffe."

"Because there are ditches to be dug and there's garbage to be hauled and there's fruit to be picked, and we seem to have mislaid all our Mexicans," said Jason. "Don't be in such a hurry to grow up, son. You've got four years of service ahead of you, and then the world will be your oyster. College or trade or technical school or whatever's right for you, or if you've still got nothing but space between your ears, outer space that is, you can go to the Air Academy if that's still what you want, and become a Lunatic if you like, although we do hope you can stay closer to home."

"I think our lunar pioneers prefer to be called Selenites, Dad," Whittaker reminded him.

"I know what I said. Anybody who wants to live for years on end in an air-conditioned coffin has got a few screws loose, and besides, your mother and I want to try to get every one of you back here every Christmas if possible."

"But what about your responsibilities here on earth?" asked Melanie. "Once you're out of the army in four years you can also get your housing loan and buy a place for you and Susan and your prom baby."

"What are you, still seven years old?" said Whittaker, scowling at her.

Jason frowned. "That would be Susan . . . ?"

"Purdue," said Jenny. "You know her, Jace, we've had her over for dinner a few times. She's in Whit's graduating class."

"And we have a prom baby coming?" Jason asked.

"Hardly, since prom isn't until weekend after next!" said Whittaker.

"Oh, yeah, that's right," said Jason with a nod. "Here we do ours a couple of weeks after graduation, not a couple of months before. I keep forgetting."

"When did you guys have your proms?" asked Melanie.

"We didn't," said her father. "I was banned from mine for racism, and your mother was on the bounce with the NVA at sweet seventeen. Not that I could have taken your mother to mine, anyway, since I'm older than she is. We weren't even in Hellgate High together."

"In *what*?" asked Melanie, laughing.

"Swear to God, that's what Samuel Johnson High School used to be called!" he father assured her. "It was a gate of hell, too. Anyway, Whit, if that's the way the wind is blowing with you and this Purdue girl, you and I need to have a word beforehand, and probably I need to speak to the girl's parents as well. Not that I can see anyone having any objection to you or our family, unless—her people weren't Unionists during the first war, were they?"

"I don't know, I never asked," said Whittaker in exasperation. "It hasn't seemed important. It was long ago, no offense, Dad."

"None taken, son," said Jason with a smile. "To kids your age it *was* long ago, and that's the way I hope it stays, which is one reason I never sat my children down and told you a string of horror stories that would just give you nightmares to no good purpose. But getting back to this young lady, if her family is Christian and they don't approve on religious grounds, then I would expect both of you to respect their wishes. If you don't want to marry the girl, then look elsewhere. If you're too busy, your mother and I can start looking for you."

"Hire a matchmaker?" suggested Melanie mischievously.

"Not for me," said Whittaker. "They'll have to hire one to find some poor slob to dump *you* on, though."

"Well, we'll talk about that later. Whit, I'm sorry if I don't seem overly forthcoming about the past. Maybe it's because I don't want to cast a shadow on your own lives by unnecessarily bringing up things which are now dead and gone, thank God." Jason leaned over and kissed his wife. "I'll see you tonight."

After he had gone, Mel said, "Dad killed people back then, didn't he?"

"Yes, dear, and so did I," Jenny told her. "And that is all that either he or I will ever have to say on that subject, Mel. But beyond that I'm not totally in agreement with your father here. In some sense, what we

are is a part of you two in much more than the biological sense, and you need to understand us to understand your own nature, and there are some things that you do have a right to know, in a general way. You have a right to know where and when and what you come from, what brought you here. But your dad is right about the nightmares. That's why we made sure that none of our children were ever exposed to any of this when you were really young, although ZOG left us no choice with Junior or Katie when they came calling that summer twenty years ago."

"Mom, if it really bothers you, you know you don't have to talk about it," said Whittaker.

"There are certain things that I will never discuss with you, but to be honest I'm still not exactly sure what it is you're looking for, dear," said Jenny.

"How about when you and Dad first met, back in the day as you call it?" asked Melanie.

"Come on, you already know that story," said Jenny in good-humored exasperation. "We told you often enough. Jason's family and mine both lost their homes to foreclosure during the Second Depression, and we ended up in Brookgreen Gardens Apartments, or tenements would be a better word. That's where we were living when I was born. You remember. We took you kids out there once a few years ago, and we showed you the apartments your father and I both lived in when we were children."

"I remember they were full of Russians and Afrikaners when we visited that day," said Whit.

"Yes, after the Revolution the government turned them into new immigrant housing, and believe me they're a *lot* nicer place now than they were back then," said Jenny. "In those days there were two kinds of tenants who lived there, dispossessed white people like us and illegal Mexicans, and both groups were jammed like sardines into a few ticky-tacky firetrap rooms. There was a lot of crime and violence and drugs and break-ins, because the Mexicans preyed on us like we were livestock. The police used to come through on sweeps, searching all the white people's apartments for Party literature and guns, which were illegal under the Schumer Act, but they never bothered the beaners.

The place was run by a residents' council which in turn reported to the Missoula Human Relations Commission, and that was run by liberals and Jews from the university, so we didn't have much say in our lives. If a white family was evicted for so-called anti-social behavior, meaning anything racial, then you were blacklisted. Even if you were lucky enough to have a job, no one else in town would rent to you for fear of the media and the HRC, so the next step down was a hobo jungle under a highway underpass somewhere. Or if it was winter the family had to load up whatever motor vehicle they had and head south for California or Arizona, where at least they wouldn't freeze to death. A lot of those people never came back.

"Anyway," she went on, "Through luck or bribery or finagling, a number of white families managed to get housed together on the same street in the complex, and there was a little playground there where it was more or less safe for the children to play in during the daytime, so long as we stayed in groups and we had adults to watch us. Your father first saw me when he was twelve and I was three. My own father had gotten hold of an old panel truck, and he was running an off-the-books moving and hauling service."

"Off what books?" asked Whittaker.

"I mean the business was technically illegal. No business license, no sales tax records, no withholding tax records, no medical contributions, no government safety inspections, so forth and so on. The government in those days wanted everybody dependent on some kind of paycheck they could threaten to cut off. They didn't like white people being economically independent, owning or running their own businesses, and so they tried to tax and regulate them out of business. Anyway, one day my dad needed an extra hand to do a moving job and he hired Jason for the day, and he came up to our apartment. Dad was on child-watching duty out in the playground. I was sitting in the sandbox wearing old clothes from the Salvation Army. I was eating a plastic bowl of god-awful microwave spaghetti my mother had gotten from a food bank, with a plastic spoon, and according to Jason I had red goo all over my face. I'll take his word for it."

"And he sang the worm song!" said Mel, giggling.

"Nobody loves me, everybody hates me,
I'm going to eat some worms!
Big fat juicy ones, long thin skinny ones,
Chomp them while they squirm!
Nobody loves me, everybody hates me,
I'm going to eat some worms!
First one's easy, goes down greasy,
Second one sticks to my tongue!"

"Yes, he did," said Jenny primly. "He was as silly at twelve as you are at thirteen, and at that age he thought it was funny to tease small children. I didn't appreciate his humor and I threw a toy of some kind at him, I can't remember what. So that's how I met your father."

"Mom, you know that's not what she meant," said Whittaker. "She means later, in the NVA. Look, really, if it was in some horrible way in the middle of a murder and you don't want to talk about it, really, we get it."

"No, although you didn't really meet people as such in the Volunteers," said Jenny. "We both had code names, several apiece, it just happened that we knew who each other was. I didn't end up with the Army until about eighteen months after 10/22, and once I was involved I didn't meet Jason again right away."

"Well, how did one go about becoming a Volunteer in those days?" her son asked. "One of the things we hear sometimes is that a lot of people wanted to join the NVA, but they never did because they couldn't find the Army and had no way to contact them."

"Yes, that was true," agreed Jenny. "There were Volunteers assigned to recruiting duty in every community where the Army operated, and it was actually one of the most dangerous assignments going. If a recruiter made a mistake and approached the wrong person, they risked being betrayed and arrested. I had a cousin, Jared Wardlaw, who was about my age back then, and he was a Volunteer. To tell the truth, I can't remember how he got involved himself, but he was. One of my uncles had died and left my mother enough of an inheritance so we were finally able to get out of Brookgreen Gardens and rent a proper house, the one on Connell Avenue where your grandparents used to

live, remember? That's where we were on 10/22. That's where we met the Myers family and I started baby-sitting Georgia. Her mother was a patronizing liberal bitch who made a big deal out of paying me above the going rate to show her *noblesse oblige*, but money was money in those days. Anyway, back then you had to have an actual state-issued license to drive a car, but you could get one very young in Montana because all the kids out on ranches needed to be able to drive, and so I had a provisional license when I was fifteen. Jared started using me to carry messages and sometimes packages to various comrades around town. I had no record, my dad's car was clean, and I could giggle like a fool at cops and Fatties, which meant I could get through the checkpoints."

"Guns and explosives?" asked Whit, fascinated.

"I don't know. I never asked, which impressed Jared and convinced him I had the right stuff, as people used to say back in those days."

"Didn't you know what you were involved in?" asked her son.

"I guessed pretty quick, yes," said Jenny with a chuckle. "I can't remember when I figured out that Jared was with the NVA, but I do remember I told him one night that I knew what he was doing and if he needed help with anything else he just had to ask. A few days later he took me to see A.J. Drones, who was the Missoula Commandant. A.J. and I had a long talk and he liked what he saw, so he gave Jared the nod to bring me into his crew, and I started doing other stuff. Proactive, as we used to say. Anyway, that's how I became a gun bunny. When my father found out he asked me to leave home."

"Grandpa threw you out of the house because you were a Volunteer?" asked Melanie, scandalized.

"No, honey, he didn't throw me out of the house, at least not like you mean. He simply said to me, 'Jenny, I'm sorry you've had to grow up this fast, but in this filthy world we live in I suppose it was inevitable. I won't say what you're doing is wrong, but right or wrong, it's a done deal. If it was just me involved I'd say to hell with it, but you're endangering your mother and your brother and sister if you stay here. You have the right to put your own life at risk, but not theirs.' So I left. He was right, and I've never held it against him."

"Were you scared?" asked Melanie, wide-eyed.

"No, dear, when you're fifteen you usually don't have sense enough to be scared of stuff like that," said Jenny. "If it were happening to you today, you'd probably think it was some kind of big adventure. But mostly I just didn't care. It had been made clear to me all my life that America held no future for me, unless I was prepared to conform and be somebody I wasn't. Girls could get into college a lot easier than white boys in those days, but the family simply didn't have the money, and I wasn't good enough in school to get any kind of scholarship. Math and science bored me, and I had no interest in all the politically correct rubbish about Indians and evil white oppressors and the joys of les—of so-called alternative lifestyles they used to peddle at Hellgate High in those days. I refused to burn that pinch of incense that everyone had to start burning in high school. As trite and un-romantic as it may sound, my choice was take a chance and go with the NVA or end up living in a trailer and working in a laundromat or waitressing in some greasy spoon, assuming I didn't give in to despair and go on meth or crack or something. A lot of white kids did, back then. I decided I'd rather die young with a gun in my hand than a few years later in some desolate wreck of a white trash life. I think that's what motivated a lot of us, although you won't hear that in Mr. Ballard's H&MP class. Nor should you, I think. Don't get me wrong, you two. You're not being lied to. The pride and the hope, the honor and the courage, were all there. There was just a lot of other stuff as well that there's probably no need to mention. A lot of history is like that, I think. Then I met Jason again, and he met me without the red microwave goo on my face, and we both had a lot better motive than just having nothing better to do."

"You fell in love with Dad?" asked Melanie. "How did that happen? How did you know he was the one?"

"Here comes the mushy girl stuff!" said Whit in disgust.

"He came back for me," said Jenny.

"Huh?" asked Whit.

"To make a long and complicated story short, in the fourth year of the war we both ended up for a time with a Flying Column," their mother went on, refilling her coffee cup. "The Montana Regulators, under Commandant Jack Smith. Jason and I knew each other, of course, from around town in Missoula. We'd met a few times down through

the years, but because of the difference in our ages, it was just casual acquaintance. I'd had a boyfriend for awhile with the Missoula Brigade, but he was arrested and murdered by the FBI, and I'd decided getting involved with a fellow Volunteer wasn't a good emotional investment. The way things worked out, Jason and I didn't really have much to do with each other NVA-wise in the Regulators. We were always scattered across a couple of hundred square miles so the Americans couldn't catch us all in one fell swoop, we generally moved and hit in groups of about fifteen or twenty people, and we only all came together for really big operations.

"Then one day in January the FATPO raided an NVA safe house in Helena and arrested four comrades, a married couple named John and Susan Morse and two teenaged Volunteers, Greg Ennis and Joey Cermak. They were taken to the FATPO barracks on Eleventh Avenue in Helena, what used to be the Montana State Law Enforcement Training Academy. The Fatties had taken it over as their headquarters. Commandant Smith heard about it, and he decided we'd go in and rescue them."

Whit stared at his mother. "Mom . . . I know you and Dad were NVA and I know Dad marched across the bridge in Portland, because he's got the medal, but neither of you ever said anything about the Helena Raid!"

"Doctors usually don't discuss the patients they lose, dear," said Jenny with a wry smile. "Nor do armies give medals for lost battles. I assume you had it in school? What did they teach you about it?"

"Well, frankly, Mom, Mr. Ballard said it was a screw-up. Pardon my language," said her son apologetically.

"A screw-up in spades. The Commandant was a very brave man, we were all young and cocky and we were used to shooting from the hip, and we had fought and beaten them time and again, always outnumbered and outgunned, seldom with much of a plan. We pressed our luck once too often, and we came up very short."

"Mr. Ballard says that after the loss of the whole Olympic Flying Column at Ravenhill, the Helena Raid was the worst NVA military disaster during the whole War of Independence."

"Disaster is the word," agreed Jenny grimly. "Anyway, I won't spin this out until suppertime tonight. We assembled about fifty Volunteers and we went into Helena on the night of January twentieth, in six vehicles including two trucks. The plan was for the first two sections to attack the front of the FATPO barracks frontally as a diversion and to pin the enemy down with heavy fire, including our one mortar, while Commandant Smith and the third section battered down one of the steel gates at the rear, entered the jail section and extracted our people.

"Things were against us from the start. For one thing, although we didn't know it, all four of our comrades were already dead, and so the whole operation was pointless from the start. It was a dark night, about six degrees above zero, so cold the actions on a lot of our weapons froze up and we had to wear gloves so the skin of our hands wouldn't stick to the metal, except some of us forgot to bring gloves. Snow began to fall heavily as we drove in on Highway 15. Zero visibility. On top of that, someone along the way saw us going by, somehow recognized who we were, and called it in to the FATPOs. We never did find out who, but they had time to prepare. We never made it into position to begin the attack. The Fats were waiting for us and they ambushed us on North Main Street, all clumped together. Most of the Volunteers were killed in their vehicles, riddled with bullets in thirty seconds. I made it out into the snow and so did Jason and a few others. I never even fired a shot myself. I ran into a doorway to try and take cover, and I slipped on the icy steps and cracked my skull. By the time I came to, a couple of niggers in body armor had cuffed my hands and legs with plastic ties and were dragging me down a side street. They handed me over to some local cops who threw me in the back of a squad car.

"Now, what you have to understand, kids, is that in the context of that time and place, my life was over. At that point all I had to look forward to was most likely torture, rape, and murder in some federal holding facility, or at best a lifetime in prison. Congress had already passed a law stating that no one arrested for NVA activity was ever to be released from custody. *Arrested*, mind you, not convicted, although that didn't really matter since they weren't even bothering with trials any more. There I was, seventeen years old, and I was *over.* I sat there in the

back of that car listening to the sirens and occasional spurts of gunfire still going on somewhere out there in the falling snow and I knew. There was no regret, just an overpowering despair and sadness that I can't even begin to describe to you and won't even try. This was the end. From now on there was only horror and pain and blackness. I think that's probably the worst part of a ZOG arrest, the first few moments, when you're sitting in the back of the squad car in cuffs and you can see the world going by the window outside as they take you to your first cell. You can see the people and the trees and grass and stores and the world, the world that you are no longer part of and never will be, that you will never have anything to do with any more. In my case it was just snow in the headlights, but already I felt cut off from everything. My heart was still beating and I was still breathing, but I was dead, a ghost. I know this doesn't make any sense to you . . ."

She broke off for a moment, breathed deeply, and blinked back a tear. "The two cops or sheriff's deputies were standing outside and I was all alone in the back. I don't know for how long. Five minutes, ten, half an hour? I remember wondering why they didn't sit in the car with the heater on, but I guess they were under orders to stay at the ready. Then I heard muffled shots and saw several muzzle flashes in the snow outside, the car door opened, and your father reached in and yanked me out. The two cops were lying in the snow spurting blood; I remember how bright red it was under the street light. He asked me if I could run, I said no, my legs were cuffed. He had a knife and he cut the plastic ties and then he said, 'Now run! Hold my hand so we don't get separated!' So we ran, and we came to a house. We kicked in the door and utterly terrorized a man and his wife inside, made them give us the keys to his pickup truck, and Jason smashed through a roadblock and managed to get us out. I guess they couldn't use their satellites to track us at night and under all the snow clouds.

"Later on Jace told me he'd seen me get captured. He circled around through alleys and yards and saw them throw me in the squad car. The last order that anyone in the Column gave over our phones was Go Eight, General Order Number Eight, otherwise known as the Beat Feet Retreat. In other words, every man for himself and get out any way you can. When that happens it means everything has gone south, and your

first responsibility is to break contact with the scene and live to fight another day. Jason didn't do that. He went against orders and he came back for me. He gave me my life back, and since then I've given it to him. And to you, and to our country. So now you know."

"Now we know," said Whittaker, shaking his head in wonder.

"I think that's cool!" said Melanie in awe.

"Yes, it rather was, wasn't it?" agreed Jenny.

XXV

Through The Looking Glass

(32 years, seven months, and eight days after Longview.)

A wise man gets more use from his enemies than a fool from his friends.
—Baltasar Gracian

"Plane's on the ground—top-line private jet, big petrol burner, just like we predicted. They're going through Customs now," Jason Stockdale told Bob Campbell and Tom Horakova as they walked into the large and comfortable official reception lounge at the Missoula airport. A number of other senior members of the Lost Creek excavation team were also present, waiting on the foreign scientists and academics who had just landed.

"Let's hope they don't create an incident right off the bat," said Bob. "They wouldn't try to bring in any pornography or Zionist videos, would they? I mean, surely we've had *some* kind of contact with these people beforehand and somebody has explained our laws to them?"

"Yes, I spoke with Dr. Haskins, Dr. Fortis, and Dr. Wyrick on videophone a few days ago," Jason told them. "I would have liked to do so much earlier and more extensively, but it took this long to get all the necessary government permission slips on their end for a conference call between London, Harvard, the Smithsonian, and us here in the wicked and evil Northwest Republic where the powers of darkness are exalted. Had to be sure their eggheads wouldn't catch racist cooties through the monitor, I suppose. Anyway, yes, they know they're not supposed to bring porn. No Zionist or Jew drivel, no nigger music, nothing promoting race-mixing or buggery, and none of certain drugs

like heroin and LSD which are considered anti-social. Of course, their definition of what's anti-social and ours are probably poles apart."

"I'll be interested to see if any of them try to test us on something petty like that, right off the bat," said Robert. "If they do, we'll know they're probably not our bad boy or girl. He or she will be coming in squeaky clean and exquisitely polite. Yes sir, no sir, three bags full, sir."

"They're coming up here when they clear Customs?" asked Tom.

"Yes, the airport manager and the protocol guy from the Foreign Ministry met them on the tarmac and are guiding them through," said Jason. "We will have a brief introduction up here, after which they may or may not want to unwind with a few of our fine Northwest brews . . ." he nodded toward a buffet table and minibar along one side of the wall, including a large ice tub of Red Hook and Rogue Brewery beers in dark bottles, "Or they may fling a hissy fit about something wicked and racist they've seen already and start throwing the beers. I honestly have no idea how these people are going to behave. We've never had much non-violent interaction with the rest of the world over the past forty years, and we're still kind of new at it."

"They're probably going to be freaked out by our wardrobe," said Bob.

"Not surprising," commented Tom. "I spend a lot of time online reading their publications and watching their videos and raw news feeds we intercept. Have you any idea what they're *wearing* Out There now? When they wear anything at all? The men look like zombies risen from the grave, and the women all dress like wh—like bad ladies," he hastily amended himself, remembering that Ally and several other women were in the room.

Tom had a point. Sartorial fashion in the Northwest Republic was being carefully and gently yet deliberately walked backward through time by the Ministry of Culture, on the theory that clothes do to a large extent make the man or woman, and that sloppiness of dress leads to sloppiness of mind. Bob Campbell was wearing his Guard uniform, but Tom and Jason were dressed in the Northwest's formal business style, which was taken from the 1930s—double-breasted suits, light cotton for summer, with square-cut shoulders, wide cuffed trouser legs

with razor-sharp creases, wide neckties, and long-sleeved shirts with cufflinks. Jason was wearing a charcoal gray suit and Tom dark blue with pin-stripes, with matching fedoras. Dr. Arne Wingard turned out to be a much nattier and more fashionable Northwest clothes horse when he wasn't up to his knees in coprolite. He was wearing a quasi-1890s style that was becoming popular, a brown corduroy coat with matching waistcoat and trousers, spats, a short turnover shirt collar, and a knotted beige cravat. His straw boater hung on the hat rack.

Women's fashions were also headed back to the days of Daisy and the bicycle built for two. Allura had doffed her khaki digging shorts and shirt, and she was now wearing a tight bodice of powder blue with ruffled sleeves and separate white "trumpet" skirt gathered at the waist, with a navy blue jacket. Barely visible beneath her ankle-length hem were tall lace-up boots, and her own straw hat hung beside Wingard's. Corsets and leg-of-mutton sleeves hadn't re-emerged yet.

The door to the lounge opened, and the Eminent Persons Delegation from foreign parts entered the room in single file, the ten of them staring around in wonder as if they were being led through some kind of zoo or fun house, with live and dangerous exhibits. Gil Tucker, the protocol officer from the Foreign Ministry in Olympia, stepped over to Bob. "No problem with Customs, Colonel," he said in a low voice. "Their baggage has been collected and stowed on the mini-bus, which they will take to Big Sky Lodge when we're done here, for their first night Home—well, here in the Republic, I mean. The government has individual cars waiting for them at the hotel, and they can drive up to Anaconda on their own and make their own accommodation arrangements there if they like, or they can stay in a Party guest house." One of the ways the government of the Republic saved money and guarded against nascent corruption was by providing comfortable yet Spartan accommodation of its own for various traveling functionaries rather than paying for hotels, with all the consequent possibilities for fiddling receipts, expense accounts, and bar bills.

"We're giving them cars?" asked Jason.

"The Foreign Ministry guy's idea," explained Tucker. "No pressure, no feeling on their part of being shepherded and chaperoned, they're not dependent on us for transport, they are perfectly free to go anywhere

and see anything they like so long as it's not on a military base or the Centralia spaceport. They can even see most of the spaceport if they want to go over to Washington for a tour later on, so long as they clear it with the Defense Minister."

"Not levitation vehicles, though?" asked Bob Campbell.

"No, sir, just normal ground cars," said Garrison.

"Good," said Jason. "Don't want them playing around with a flight-capable vehicle they have no idea how to operate and breaking their necks." Tucker moved away from them and back toward the foreign guests.

"Trackers in all the cars?" asked Jason *sotto voce*.

"Of course," said Tom.

The two groups stared at one another briefly. Jason was right; this was the first time any of these people had ever interacted with someone else from the other side in non-hostile terms, or met one, or even seen one other than looking down a rifle barrel. Jason stepped forward. "Hello," he said to all of them. "Welcome to the Northwest American Republic. I'm Jason Stockdale, Chancellor of the University of Montana. The Lost Creek project is being carried out under our auspices. This is Dr. Arne Wingard, who is the field director in charge of the actual excavation. These others are colleagues of ours whom I hope you will come to know are all involved in the dig. Mr. Tucker, you've already met our guests. Will you take it from here?"

Tucker duly made the introductions. By and large there were no surprises. Allura's idol, the Oxford don Dr. Fred Haskins, turned out to be a mild-mannered Englishman with graying hair and a thin, ascetic face. His assistant, the Scotsman Andrew Renfrew, was a pale younger man with sandy hair and a nervous, almost jumpy air. In fact they all looked a bit twitchy; Bob Campbell reminded himself that these foreigners were now in the presence of people whom they had been indoctrinated all their lives to regard as monsters and devils incarnate. Doctor Arnold Kellerman from Toronto University was a large and pasty chap who greeted them all with the bluff hail-fellow-well-met demeanor of a politician forced by an impending election to press the flesh with the peasantry. His blonde English assistant, Letitia Haines, was flawlessly dressed in a severe but tasteful tweed ensemble

that looked like it must have come from Harrods, and she managed to look simultaneously cool and slinky in it. *Better keep an eye on that one around our menfolk*, thought Tom to himself. The French couple, the Martineaus, were slim, nondescript, middle-aged, and intense. They ignored the buffet and practically tackled Dr. Wingard and wrestled him to the floor, immediately pummeling him with questions about the Lost Creek site. Tom thought, *If one of those two is a spy with any thought in their head more recent than the lower Pleistocene Era, they're the most superb actors I've ever seen.*

The Americans were different, not openly hostile, but with more of a suspicious air, several of them almost sullen. That was to be expected. All of them were close enough in age to the time of the Seven Weeks' War to have been affected by it, and some of them were old enough to have adult memories, although so far as WPB records showed, none of them had served in the U.S. military. Doctor Alvin Fortis was a rather dumpy, balding man of about fifty who was wearing a single-piece nylon overall with a hood, which Tom recognized as current semi-formal wear in the U.S. His thirty-something assistant Ralph Tarricone was wearing a black tank-top T-shirt and baggy cargo pants with bulbous-tipped shoes, a style that had once been negroid but was now normal American street wear. The two alleged nymphomaniacs from Harvard, Doctor Amanda Wyrick and her assistant Bella Sutcliffe, were a contrast. The PhD was a lissome blonde who appeared around 40 years old, but according to her file was 46. Ms. Sutcliffe was a stockier, more voluptuous type about ten years younger with china-blue eyes, coal-black hair, and a brilliant skin of porcelain white. Any Jewish ancestry she had did not appear in her face. Both were wearing safari suits with short pants and knee socks.

Doctor Fortis looked at his own group and the Northwesterners. "Good God!" he said, bemused. "I had no idea what to expect, but this almost resembles the Mad Hatter's tea party!"

"Welcome to Wonderland, then," said Allura Campbell with a warm smile.

"We're all here because we are fascinated by the past, Doctor Fortis," said Jason. "Consider that you've gone through the looking glass and

back in time, which in many respects you have, not just with reference to Lost Creek."

Bob addressed the group. "Tell you what, folks, by way of breaking the ice, let's just get the grim and scary part over with, insofar as there is any. I hope there won't be. My name is Colonel Robert Campbell of the Civil Guard, the Northwest Republic's national police force. I'm the commander of the Montana Criminal Investigation Division, which means I'm chief of detectives for this neck of the woods. This is Captain Thomas Horakova of the dreaded Bureau of State Security, about which I am sure you have heard a plethora of horror stories."

"Some of them are true, most aren't," said Tom.

"I think it's best we start off by getting everything right out here in the open, and then I'll let you get into the Red Hook and mingle." Bob continued. "I know all of you have received briefings from your respective governments, not just on Lost Creek but on us, and you've been told what dangerous and violent psychopaths we are. That's not *quite* the case. We teach our children a different version of the Golden Rule than you do. Ours goes: 'Do unto others *as* others do unto you.' Our primary schools are sexually segregated until the age of thirteen or so when our young people of both genders move on to high school. In boys' elementary school, in every classroom, there is a motto that hangs on the wall, and every Northwest boy knows it by heart by the time he's ten years old. That motto reads, *'I won't be wronged, I won't be insulted, and I won't be laid a hand on. I don't do these things to other people, and I require the same from them.'* Now you understand us, better than you could from any briefing you could ever receive from your own rulers."

Campbell went on. "The Northwest people in this room are students and scientists and scholars just like yourselves, whether you choose to recognize our country and their qualifications or not. Regardless of nation or politics, they are your kindred spirits, as I hope you will come to learn. Captain Horakova and I, on the other hand, represent the government of the NAR. I could give you all a bunch of soft soap about how we're just here to protect and serve the community and make sure your stay is a pleasant one, and that wouldn't be completely untrue. We really do want this visit to our country to be a good memory for all of you. But we are also here to protect and serve the interests of

the state, and unlike your own police, we at least own up to that fact honestly. We live in a world where every aspect of life has become politicized, a process that began in North America over a hundred years ago, and it would be dishonest to pretend that we are unaware of the profound political and historical implications of what is happening at Lost Creek.

"In case you wonder whether or not you're going to be watched, certainly we're going to be keeping an eye on things throughout your visit. Common sense should tell you that, and we're not denying it. We are doing so for one reason and one reason only: to make sure that you are able to see what you need to see and understand what we have found, and draw your conclusions from it free from any politically motivated attempts on anyone's part to distract or confuse or deceive you. We have no need to do that, because we know that Lost Creek is real. As always, we have truth on our side, but in this case, thanks to the men and women of Comrade Stockdale's generation who took it upon themselves to change the world, we have the power and the tools to defend truth, as for so long we did not. Unfortunately, there are others who are highly motivated to denounce and discredit Lost Creek, and who will most likely attempt to do so. We will make sure they fail, at least on this end. What you write, and what you say, and what you report back to your respective academic and scientific bodies about Lost Creek, that we have no control over. We do have control over what happens here in this country, and we intend to make sure that you get the truth. What you will do with it is up to you.

"Beyond anything to do with the dig at Lost Creek, I want you all to know that you are free to travel anywhere you want in our country, free to meet and speak with anyone you want, and free to say what's on your mind to anyone. You are not in jail here, and we're not going to try and herd you like cattle from place to place or anything like that. There are of course certain common sense restrictions that would suggest themselves. For example, it's probably not a good idea to go into the Long Branch saloon in Anaconda, get drunk and start running your mouth about the glories of multi-culturalism and diversity and what racist barbarians we are. Captain Horakova here fought in the Seven Weeks' war at age seventeen, and you should bear in mind that most

people of his age and over are almost certainly veterans who remember a time when your world tried to destroy ours. We have freedom of speech here, but we also have something your societies no longer recognize: individual responsibility. You are now in a place such as you have never seen before, a genuinely free country. The way we keep it free is by ensuring that words and actions have consequences, both good and bad. It's a great way to live, and none of us here would have it any other way. Welcome, and enjoy your stay in this free and mighty land of ours—and yours."

There was a long silence and the sudden hiss of a bottle cap being flipped off. Campbell glanced over and saw the younger man from the Smithsonian, Ralph Tarricone, caught guiltily with a beer in his hand. "Sorry, Colonel," he said sheepishly. "Couldn't resist. My dad used to live in Seattle and he told me about Red Hook. We can't get it in D.C." A chuckle ran through the room.

"Try the Rogue red ale," advised Campbell. "Nectar of the gods, I promise."

Slowly the two groups broke ranks and started to mingle around the buffet table, with more beers being cracked and plates being piled up with salmon salad, sandwiches of Montana beef and Oregon cheese, and bowls filled with collations of Northwest fruit, apples and pears, blueberries and strawberries. Tom overheard Madame Martineau asking Jason at the fruit bar, "*Monsieur le Chancellor,* if it is not a state secret, how do you get tangerines and grapefruit past *les sanctions*?"

"No need to smuggle them any more," Jason told her. "Almost twenty percent of the Republic's agriculture is now hydroponic to one degree or another. Out on the plains of Idaho and eastern Washington and Oregon you will see mile after mile of greenhouses along the side of the highway, in rows two miles long sometimes. We can grow anything at any season now, from citrus fruit to tobacco to orchids. We are the world's number one per capita food-exporting nation in every area except for wheat, where Russia still has us topped, and certain fresh fruits like oranges and grapefruit."

"Russia is a much bigger country," said Doctor Haskins, loading his plate with a mountain of salmon salad. "Yet what you have done here in thirty years is most incredible, Doctor Stockdale."

"I'm just Mister Stockdale," Jason corrected him. "I never actually completed my degree at the University here. Not even my B.A."

"Why not?" asked Madame Martineau.

Jason pointed to the Old NVA pin in his lapel. "History got in the way, ma'am. When people are trying to kill you, you tend to cut class a lot."

"So how you did come to be Chancellor?" asked the Canadian archaeologist, Doctor Kellerman.

"Spoils of war kind of thing," Jason told him. "Or spoils of revolution."

"The ONR guy who talked to us before we left said you're not a real academic or a scholar, you're just a thug who shot his way into the Chancellor's job," Bella Sutcliffe told him bluntly.

"And he was absolutely correct," replied Jason, beaming. "Hence the Al Capone getup." He thumbed his wide lapels.

"The characterization doesn't seem to bother you," said Bella.

"To have the Office of Northwest Recovery badmouth one is an honor for any citizen of the Republic," Jason said.

Tom Horakova had expected the visitors to avoid him like the plague once they knew he was a BOSS man, but to his bemusement he turned away from loading his own plate at the buffet to find himself surrounded by a bevy of curious females. "Could I trouble you for a light, Captain?" said Bella Sutcliffe, cigarette in her mouth, carefully balancing her plate and a bottle of beer. "You know, I could really get used to this business of being allowed to smoke in public."

"I thought they finally gave up on banning tobacco Out There a few years ago," replied Tom, flicking his Zippo. "That steak sandwich and those salmon cheese things would probably still get you a few months in some blue states and cities, though." The old dichotomy between red states and blue states had sprung up again in the U.S. in the wake of One Nation Indivisible's demise. Blue states like New York, Massachusetts, and Illinois still more or less adhered to the government in Washington D.C. and allowed federal agencies to operate. Red ones like Tennessee, Missouri, American Texas and what remained of the African chaos of the South paid only basic lip service to the President and Congress and generously assumed the burden of law-making, law

enforcement, and infrastructure from the feds, the fig leaf being that this was in order to cut costs. The fact was that the D.C. government no longer had the muscle to enforce its will on large sections of the North American continent, and it was now pretty much a paper tiger as far as being able to threaten the Northwest Republic went.

"Oh, yeah, this food is great, I'm going to gain twenty pounds while I'm here," said Bella with a laugh. "They stopped criminalizing tobacco possession *per se* because they had to start collecting taxes on *something* again, so you can buy cigarettes and cigars legally in TPC stores if you pay twelve hundred bucks a year for a license. Now in most places it's not just any smoking in public that's banned, but any smoking around a child under twelve, including in your own home of course, any smoking in a communal structure which means all apartment buildings, no smoking in any place of business at all even if it's not open to the public, so forth and so on," Bella went on. "It's a fund-raising thing. What's left of the federal government can't collect much in the way of taxes any more, and so they use the TEA as revenuers, kind of like they used to do for pot a century ago. The DHS spies on people not just for political or racial crimes any more, but mostly trying to bust them for various kinds of unauthorized smoking so they can fine the hell out of them, get asset confiscation orders against them and take every fucking penny they've got—oh, sorry, sorry, I just made a no-no. You guys are all Goody-Two-Shoes on the language thing, right?"

"You're an American, Ms. Sutcliffe," replied Tom. "Nobody expects you to know how to act."

"Ooh, touché, Bel!" exclaimed Amanda Wyrick.

Letitia Haines pointed to the red, white, and black ribbon over his jacket pocket. "Pardon me, Captain, but is that the Iron Cross?"

"Yes ma'am, it is," he told her, sipping on his ginger ale. The NVA's General Order Number Ten was now a distant memory and a historical curiosity, but he was still on duty.

"And you won it at age seventeen?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Your army has seventeen-year-old soldiers?" asked Bella Sutcliffe. "Isn't that against the Hague Convention?"

"Our *existence* is against the Hague Convention, Ms. Sutcliffe. But no, most men in the Northwest go into the military officially for the second part of their national service, usually at the age of eighteen or so, although they also get military courses in high school, of course. In case our annoying neighbors ever decide to come calling again. But back then, when we knew you were coming and the national emergency was declared, they called up pretty much everybody who was ambulatory. I served in a support unit along with my troop of Pioneers, which are kind of our version of the Boy Scouts."

"You mean the Hitler Youth?" said Amanda Wyrick archly.

Tom shook his head. "No, ma'am, the Hitler Youth and the Valkyries are private organizations run by National Socialist families for their children, although anybody can join. The Pioneers are the official Party youth organization, and they're more inclusive, as I believe you would say Out There. Some kids are members of both groups. I was. Anyway, our Pioneer troop was combined with a company of B-Specials, which consisted of men over fifty. They called us Cradle and Grave units. Ours was commanded by my own father, Sergeant Eli Horakova. He and I both got Iron by defending one of the special mobile anti-aircraft units we used at the time and preventing its capture by your lot, along with a number of other comrades, of course."

"Is your father still alive?" asked Dr. Wyrick.

"No, ma'am, he died about ten years ago. Pancreatic cancer. We can cure that now, but it came just a little too late for Dad."

"So how does one get to be a secret policeman in the Republic?" asked Bella Sutcliffe teasingly.

"It's a secret." Tom looked up and saw Bob Campbell beckoning him. "Excuse me please, ladies." He walked over to Bob's side. "Thanks for the rescue. I know you said no war talk if at all avoidable, but they started it."

"I think the Sutcliffe woman was sizing you up. Do I need to call in Marie to chaperone you and protect your virtue?" asked Campbell.

"Don't worry, not my type," said Horakova. Allura Campbell caught their eye and beckoned them from where she sat in one corner with Jason Stockdale and with Dr. Haskins the Oxonian, their plates

and beers on a coffee table before them. "Ally wants us to go and meet the big cheese."

"We need to meet them all, now or over the next few days, as casually as we can so we can size them all up," said Bob. They went over and sat down, and both shook hands with Haskins. He turned out to be a pleasant man, and judging from his conversation with no apparent political or racial axes to grind.

"I have to say, Colonel, that I'm very impressed with the quality and the keenness of your people you've got working on this project," he told them. "Not to mention the high standard of expertise I'm seeing so far in the published work on the Lost Creek excavation site which I've read online."

"They allow you to view Northwest web sites in the U.K.?" asked Bob. "I thought you had to get all kinds of special permits."

"Which I obtained, with some difficulty," said Haskins ruefully. "I'd say Ms. Campbell is easily as knowledgeable as any doctoral candidate I've encountered in my career."

"It's Mrs. Campbell, sir," said Ally. "We do things the old way here."

"Ah yes, the old way," said Haskins with a nod, raising his beer. "Here's to the old way. I notice you have the same name as the Colonel here. Any relation?"

"Bob is my father-in-law. My husband is a Guard. He's on duty today, but he spends a lot of his spare time helping out at the site, so you'll meet him as well when we get out there."

"I find it surprising you're married already," said Haskins. "Of course, I noticed the ring right off. In England one never sees them any more. And so young! Why, you can't be more than twenty-three years old, my dear."

"Twenty-two," said Ally. "And with a four-year-old son."

"Bloody hell! In England wh—English women don't enter into permanent domestic partnerships until they're in their late thirties, and very seldom bother to get married at all. Got to get their careers on track, pop that one kiddie, then check it off on life's to-do list. Sometimes the fathers stay around, but mostly they don't bother these

days, and more and more women use artificial insemination. Order a da from a menu, like a Chinese take-away."

"I don't know how anyone can live like that," said Ally, shaking her head sadly. "No wonder they're so unhappy Out There."

"You know, Doctor Haskins, you *can* say 'white women' here," said Bob Campbell with a chuckle. "We won't lock you up and destroy your career for a casual politically incorrect remark."

"No, but my own government would do so in a heartbeat, if they ever found out. Some of my esteemed colleagues here might decide to report me to the Race Relations Board when I get back to Oxford," said Haskins dolefully. "Colonel, I hope you will understand if we all seem a bit stand-offish on this trip. We don't mean to be rude, it's just we're bloody worried about getting too relaxed and letting something slip. We're all under a microscope here."

"I presume we've got an assortment of ONR, CSIS, and MI6 agents in the mix," said Tom. "Don't suppose you'd care to *really* blot your copybook and tell me who they are?"

Haskins chuckled. "You know, Captain, I might just be tempted to do that out of pure contrariness, if I had any idea of their identity. Unfortunately, I don't. I could be a spy myself, of course, and so you have to approach anything I say with caution. My assistant Andy Renfrew has a very sharp mind, even if he is a bit of a fussbudget who takes the dour Scot thing a tad too far. If he's been suborned by MI6, I hope they're paying him well; Oxford gives unpublished junior fellows the immense prestige of serving in an eight-hundred-year old institution of learning, accompanied by the barest pittance. Kellerman wouldn't need money. The spooks would turn him by appealing to his vanity, which is vast. Actually, I'm fairly certain Arnie isn't a spy. Not a discreet kind of chap at all, you see. If he was, he couldn't resist dropping portentous and mysterious hints, and I've not picked up any such. His assistant, Letty Haines, is a brilliant and formidable young woman who wants Arnie's job and will probably get it sooner or later, and she will be very good at it when she does. She's quite capable of grassing on him to the Human Rights Tribunal back in the Great White North, or for that matter against me or Andrew to the Race Relations Board or the University authorities back home if we become indiscreet in our cups

while we're here, or if any of us seem too matey with you gentlemen or any of the locals. But I suspect it would be purely out of personal and professional ambition, rather than because she was working for the British or Canadian government. Still, I suppose if there is an MI6 or a CSIS bod here, it has to be one of us four, doesn't it? Me or Andy or Letty, or just possibly Arnie. The rest of the delegation, the Yanks and the French couple, I don't know well enough to speculate. Now, Mrs. Campbell, please go over once again this codswallop about how you think you may be able to find contemporary remains of both Cro-Magnon and *homo sapiens*? I admit I find that hard to swallow."

"First, the C-M tumuli remains are from Level One, late Paleolithic, and the bones are carbon dated at between eleven and twelve thousand years," began Ally.

"Which is the first thing we're going to have to check out from top to bottom, because it's barking mad," said Haskins. "It is chiseled in stone that the last Cro-Magnon chap turned up his toes twenty thousand years ago, end of bloody story. If those carbon dates pan out, they are the most recent Cro-Magnon remains ever found, and in North America, no less. They're going to blow all current theories out of the water."

"And Kennewick Man was nine thousand years old," added Ally. "That puts KM and C-M within three, maybe only two thousand years of one another, barely a heartbeat in evolutionary time."

"The rest of the world still doesn't accept Kennewick Man as modern Caucasian," Haskins reminded her. "Or if we do, we don't dare say so for fear of ending up in a jail cell, or beaten to death on some sidewalk with hammers and iron bars by leftist student thugs of the kind who police most European universities, hunting heresy."

"Do *you* accept Kennewick Man as Caucasian?" asked Jason.

"The official U.S. government study group report from 2005 is useless, of course, since the group was chosen on political grounds rather than an objective scientific basis," responded Haskins. "We are expected to believe that it was pure convenient coincidence that a female Japanese expert just happened to find that Kennewick Man was an Ainu from the northern islands of Japan, which by the by would be almost as anomalous as if he were white. There are *samisdat* copies of

James Chatters' original report and findings on the Kennewick remains circulating in certain circles throughout Europe and North America, although anyone found in possession of such a forbidden document is brought up on disciplinary charges and may lose tenure. I have seen such a copy and had a chance to study it, and I can find no reason to disagree with Doctor Chatters that the remains were modern Caucasian and not Amerindian, although of course I can't say so publicly. It's a pity the remains were lost to posterity. I understand you were not able to recover them after your revolution all those years ago?"

"No," said Jason, shaking his head in disgust. "The minute Chelsea Clinton announced the ceasefire, one of the first things the Americans did, in this case the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, was to remove the Kennewick bones from the Northwest. They are now officially missing, lost in transit or mislaid or whatever their stupid story is. We suspect they're hidden in a safe deposit box, or somewhere in the Smithsonian, and if I can catch Doctor Fortis in a chatty mood I might ask him about them. But he may not even know, and if he does it would be more than his job and maybe his life is worth to reveal the location of Kennewick Man. Frankly, I think the Americans probably destroyed the remains out of sheer spite at being run out of the Northwest by the NVA."

"Very likely," agreed Haskins glumly. "Scientists and politicians are two of the most spiteful breeds of mankind. But if what you say about Lost Creek and what you have found there is true—well, I think you see why all of us took the risk of coming. Sometimes the passion, the almost *lust* for discovery and knowledge can overcome fear. Not always, but sometimes."

There was a commotion from down in the airport's main terminal, audible even in the reception room. Someone was shouting through a bullhorn and there was the sound of many emotional voices. Campbell and Horakova excused themselves and strolled casually out onto the walkway to check it out. They looked down and saw a group of over a hundred people, men and women and children, dressed in a motley of clothes and carrying battered luggage. They were being herded across the floor by several immigration officials and Civil Guards. Many of them were chattering, shouting, laughing hysterically, ranting and raving, some of them weeping. Haskins and Bella Sutcliffe had followed

them out and stood with the two cops looking down at the scene. "What on earth?" exclaimed Haskins.

"Looks like some kind of roundup," said Bella Sutcliffe with a scowl. "Where are you taking those people? What have they done?"

"Yeah, does kind of look like one of those old propaganda movies where we're rounding up the Jews for Auschwitz, doesn't it?" chuckled Tom Horakova.

"But in fact it's rather the reverse, Ms. Sutcliffe. We are taking them to their new homes outside of town," Campbell told her. "Those, unless I miss my guess, are the passengers of Northwest Air Charter 744 from Vladivostok, although I would guess most of the people are American or Canadian. They are new white immigrants who are Coming Home, almost certainly against the law of their own countries that wouldn't give them exit visas. For whatever reason, they preferred to travel across three continents to one of the few countries where Northwest Air has landing rights, rather than try to sneak into the Republic through an American or Canadian border checkpoint with forged or deceptive paperwork. It is entirely possible that some of these people literally went around the entire world in order to settle a few hundred miles from their starting point."

"Why are those women down there crying, then?" demanded Bella Sutcliffe suspiciously.

"Because they have longed to come here for years, and they are free now, free of you and your kind and the filthy rotten world you wallow in!" snapped Horakova. Then he sighed. "Nuts! I'm sorry, Ms. Sutcliffe. That was rude and unprofessional of me."

"Hey, you're a BOSS man," replied Bella archly. "Nobody expects you to know how to act!"

XXVI

The Little Man Who Wasn't There

(32 years, seven months, and nine days after Longview)

Politically Correct history is a marvelous thing.
You never know what's going to happen yesterday.
—Anonymous American University Professor

Regardless of whatever other agendas the Eminent Persons Delegation might be following, there was no question about their burning desire to see Lost Creek. They spent one night in the Big Sky Lodge in Missoula, tossed their luggage onto a van at five in the morning for transport to whatever accommodation their hosts might choose to provide for them in Anaconda, then piled into their government loaner cars to follow Dr. Wingard southward in the dawn.

Wingard called Chancellor Jason Stockdale from his car phone on the drive up and caught him at breakfast. Jason listened to his report and then called Robert Campbell to fill him in. "We were planning on spending the first day here at UM, giving them a full formal presentation, slide show, artifacts, the works," Jason reported. "Nope, they weren't having any. They seem to know as much about the site's background as we do. I think most of them broke the law in their own countries to look over our web material and NAR news reports. I'd have thought they would at least have wanted a tour of the lab, to hear from Doctor Shardlake and his colleagues about how the carbon dating tests were done, nit-pick and challenge the results, so forth and so on. But not a bit of it. They wanted on that site. Ally's right about

one thing. I think it's going to be hard to keep picks and trowels out of these folks' hands."

"Hmm," said Campbell. "Well, that would be a propaganda plus for the Republic if we can show these scientific celebrity types digging in and getting their hands dirty, literally, but it may turn out to be problematic in other ways. Things may fall out of their pockets while they're digging, or things they find may disappear into the same pockets. We can't very well promise these people transparency and full access, and then once they get up there tell them they can look but not touch, but we need to keep an eye on them. Make sure that any digging they do, they do it with our own people nearby and looking over their shoulders, as discreetly as possible. We have to assume that one of these characters is in touch with Scorpius, and we don't want any seeding of the ground with phony evidence or any other kind of contamination."

"We already have videocams in place all over the site," said Jason. "The cameras record all the actual excavation, for that very reason, to verify that we're not doing the same thing. Not that the outside world would believe our videos any more than they would believe our scientists, but every little bit helps."

"You say they seem very knowledgeable about the dig," said Campbell. "You looked over the Scorpius file. Is there anything in there that they would *not* have been able to get from our own published commentaries on the site, something that you guys would know and Scorpius would know, but which hasn't been made publicly available? Something our ringer could only know about if he or she had seen the Scorpius files?"

"Mmm, maybe," said Jason. "The list of artifacts is pretty long, and not all of it has been published, but the foreigners are going to be seeing everything we've got over the coming weeks as part of the project. The Ministry said full transparency, so full transparency it is. Let me cogitate on that, see if I can figure out something that might be a tell if any of them has seen the Scorpius material."

"Any of them seem a little *too* enthusiastic?" asked Campbell.

"Bob, these guys are all for-real career scientists who are being presented with the chance of a lifetime to get in on the ground floor of

a discovery that will re-write history," Jason told him. "I could tell just by casual listening last night, they all have the monkey on their backs. Believe me, after ramrodding an institution of higher learning for thirty years, I know the type. One or two of them may be moonlighting for a foreign intelligence service, but I can tell you their primary interest is in Lost Creek, and what's under it."

"Mmmm. Okay, tell you what, I'll meet you up there this afternoon," said Campbell. "I want to observe these eggheads in their natural habitat. I'll wear civilian clothes and I won't bring Tom. BOSS makes outsiders twitchy, as well it should, and I don't want them to feel that we have them under a microscope. Even if we do."

Campbell was able to clear his desk of his normal work load by lunchtime—petty vandalism, car thefts, stolen lawn furniture, burglaries, a couple DUICFs (Drunk In Charge Of A Firearm), and one embezzlement case. There were a few stabbings and shootings that didn't fall into the Republic's parameters for consenting adults in such matters, and one homicide wherein the indicted man was claiming familial interference on the part of the deceased, and which required CID investigation and corroboration, or not as the case might turn out. The minuscule amount of crime requiring investigation, even in a huge Northwest Republic department like Montana, would have made any American cop laugh in derision and weep with envy. It was very easy for people to be law-abiding when there were so few laws.

He was up at Lost Creek in civvies by 3 p.m. Everyone except a small lab crew in the main shack was down at the site of the longhouse, watching Doctor Wingard and a crew of student excavators lifting earth from around the long gray stone rectangle in the ground with spades and trowels. They dumped the dirt into large wooden-framed sieves which were taken over to a canopy-covered area to be sifted and strained through screens into plastic tubs for any artifacts, before the dirt was removed to the truck and hauled away. Ally was there with her husband, Robert's Guardsman son Bob Three, who waved to his father. They had decided to de-emphasize Bob Three's relationship with Colonel Campbell as much as possible and not get too chummy in the presence of the foreign visitors. It might turn out to be a good idea to let them think Ally's husband was just another grad student and

not an actual cop himself, since it probably wasn't good psychology for them to feel like they were surrounded by police on all sides. Ally herself climbed out of the slowly sinking depression in the ground as he approached. "Found anything yet?" Robert asked her.

"A bone sewing needle," she told him. "Standard issue for cave gals. We're still at Level Three, though. We're not going to hit Level Two for another day and Level One until the day after that."

"Our friends from Out There aren't demanding that you go charging madly downward to get to the good stuff?"

"Oh, heavens, no!" she exclaimed. "They're all true professionals. Some of them spend ten years on the same dig, off and on according to the season." She sighed. "God, I envy them! To be able to excavate in Europe and the Middle East! Greek temples, Roman villas, medieval castles, whole villages wiped out by the Black Death that were never re-settled, battle sites like Cannae and Agincourt, seventeenth-century sewers, Georgian Dublin and Viking Limerick, Crusader fortresses in Palestine, Papal Avignon, monasteries, London pubs where Shakespeare got plastered and scribbled bawdy verses in iambic pentameter, Pictish burial tumuli, Saxon farmsteads. *Aaaaargh!* I'm green with envy!"

"Surely you must have some kind of excavation work here, in order to have an archaeology department at your university," said Dr. Fred Haskins, who had come up beside them, along with his colleague Dr. Renfrew.

"We have a whole lot less history than you do," replied Ally morosely. "Biggest project we've ever undertaken is to try to locate and excavate every camp Lewis and Clark ever made on our side of the line. We think we have, all the way down to Astoria and back."

"You dinna do anything wiv' Native Americans at all?" asked Renfrew. His Scots accent was light but noticeable.

"We call them Indians here," said Ally. "Old ways, remember? Besides, Native Americans is not only insulting to the millions of white people who were born here, it's inaccurate, if you consider a native American to be someone born in North America. Or South America, for that matter. I'm a native American, and so is Colonel Campbell. Doctor Wingard, as it happens, is not, although he lives here. It's too imprecise a term, and science should always be precise."

"Touché, Andy," said Haskins with a chuckle.

"But to answer your question, Doctor Renfrew, sure we excavate Indian sites, and we have several museums devoted to the Indians who inhabited the Northwest, including the tribes down along the coast who made the totem poles such as the Tlingits. Some of whom were cannibals, by the way."

"We don't deny history, Doctor Renfrew," said Campbell. "All we ask is that it be told truthfully."

"We also do a lot of excavation of old pioneer sites and homesteads and nineteenth-century areas in our cities," Ally went on. "We especially love to find old landfills. Many of them were dug up willy-nilly for their steel and plastic in the early days of the Republic, but last year we found one in north Seattle that had been filled in when a suburb was built over it in 1959. Do you know what a hula hoop is? A 45 rpm record? A Mouseketeer hat?"

"A what?" asked Renfrew in puzzlement.

"I know, that sounds a bit too recent to be really interesting," said Ally. "But it's all we've got. A lot of us take the attitude that we're practicing for the day when things change and the rest of the world accepts us, and we can go to Europe and the east coast and work there."

"I hope that happens, Mrs. Campbell," said Haskins. He leaned over to her. "How are you on underwater excavation? I'm going to let you in on a little secret so far known only to a few in the archaeological community: some oil drillers in the harbor at Barfleur think they may have found the remains of the White Ship!"

"Fantastic!" exclaimed Ally.

"The what ship?" asked Campbell.

"A ship that sank off the coast of Normandy in the year 1120 A.D., drowning William Adelin, the only legitimate son of King Henry the First and heir to the throne," explained Ally. "The captain and the crew were drunk and they never made it out of the harbor, steered right into a rock. Through a long series of events I won't get into, the sinking eventually caused a twenty-year civil war in England and put the first Plantagenet on the throne, Henry the Second. Okay, I know, all this sounds completely obscure and irrelevant to anything in the modern

world, but it isn't. That shipwreck nine hundred years ago was one of those identifiable single events with political and economic and social ramifications that made and changed a lot of history, and helped make our world what it is today, in a hundred different ways. If that ship hadn't hit that rock we would be different people in a different time and place."

"The Butterfly Effect?" asked Campbell.

"Yes, the wreck of the White Ship was a butterfly, and no one except a few obscure eggheads like us have ever even heard of it. Who's doing the underwater excavation?" she asked Haskins.

"No one," replied Haskins sadly. "Nor is anyone likely to. The wreck is under about ten feet of silt and mud, excavation would be quite expensive, and major universities in Europe have long since re-directed most archaeological funding to Asia, sub-Saharan Africa, and South America, since to my never-ending astonishment, civilization apparently began there. All that can be found in places like Europe and Egypt and Mesopotamia are the unimportant, crude and violent ancestors of people whose descendants became cruel and violent conquerors and exploiters that were very beastly to the poor little Jewish people."

"Ahh," said Campbell. "Comes the dawn!"

"Ignore Freddy," said the Scotsman. "He's doin' that deliberately tae see if I'll grass on him when we get back home, which isn't verra bright, because if ever I did he'd be buried in the King's College quad wi' a stake through his heart."

"And will you grass on him?" asked Campbell politely.

"No," said Renfrew with a tired smile. "I'm no' yer man, Colonel. We're no' idiots, ye know. You and the other bloke are probably right, one o' us is working for the spooks, but it isnae me, and I've no idea who."

"Not that you'd admit it if you were," said Campbell.

"No," replied the Scot with a laugh. "Anyway, Freddy, I came to tell ye they just found a fish hook over there in one of the sieves."

"That's to be expected in this kind of Neolithic strata," said Haskins.

"A hook made o' copper?" asked Renfrew.

"*Bollocks!*" snapped Haskins. "That's impossible! Not from that period! Oh, sorry, I must apologize, Mrs. Campbell. We were warned about our language before we came . . ."

"Not to worry," said Ally. "I actually don't know what that word means. But American Plains Indians didn't work metal. Neither did Cro-Magnon or Neanderthal man." But Haskins was already sprinting for the canopied sieving area as were several other visiting scholars. Renfrew followed him.

"Well, so much for our keeping a low profile," said Robert Campbell with a sigh. "He's right. They're not stupid and they've picked up on why Tom and I are nosing around. I suppose they all know now that we suspect one of them is a spy."

"*I* didn't know!" said Ally in surprise. "Oh, holy—are you sure, Bob?"

"Absolutely, totally, one hundred percent sure? No," admitted Campbell. "But there's been a security problem with the site, Ally. That's all I can tell you."

Ally looked away. "This filthy politics, this vile spying, this insane hatred for white people who won't bow down and kiss their noses! It killed my mother and now it's coming here to mess up my work and my life again!"

"I'm sorry, honey," said Campbell sadly. "One of the reasons Tom and I do what we do is to try and keep the poison away from your generation. As much of it as we can, anyway. But sometimes we fail. As you know."

Allura look up at him. "You know I never blamed you," she said softly.

"I'm glad to hear it, honey," he said with a nod. There was nothing more to be said on that subject. "So let's go see this fish hook everybody is all hot and bothered about."

A tiny corroded green twist, about one and a half inches long, lay on a white sheet of paper on a table under the canopy while a dozen muttering scholars leaned over it, examined it under magnifying glasses, and watched while Dr. Arne Wingard picked it up and turned it with tweezers. Jason was talking to the two students, a young man and

woman, who had sieved out the hook. "The cameras recorded the discovery, again for what it's worth," he told Bob. "This is big."

"How big?" asked Robert.

"Big big! The only worked metal artifacts ever found in the Americas are items of crude jewelry, gold and silver, copper and jade from the Aztec and Maya and Inca cultures. Not even any bronze. There are signs that native copper was worked in Michigan and Wisconsin, in the western Great Lakes area, and some archaeologists think this copper was being mined as early as 6,000 years ago, but no one knows who the hell was mining the copper or what they did with it."

"Why, it was the noble red man, of course!" suggested Campbell with a chuckle. "After all, they were the only ones here back then. Right?"

"Horse dung!" said Jason succinctly.

"Seriously? You mean to tell me that somebody was mining copper in the Great Lakes region six millennia ago, and nobody has ever even wondered who they were and what they were doing with the copper?" asked Campbell.

"Pretty much," affirmed Jason. "By the time archaeological science was sufficiently advanced to understand what they were looking at, it had already become too politically dangerous in academic circles to show overmuch curiosity regarding anything that might punch holes in the official liberal, multicultural orthodoxy. For a century now, historians and scientists throughout the Western world have had to make like the noble lord in Macbeth, and say the less while they think the more. The consequences of scientific heresy in anything racially or politically sensitive can be devastating, sometimes even a matter of life and death.

"Look, there are all kinds of strange anomalies like that all across North America, not just those Solutrean spear points littering the landscape that clearly demonstrate contact with Europe thousands of years before Columbus first looked westward and wondered what was out there. Circles of standing stones in New England that near as dammit resemble mini-Stonehenges; funny writing on rock faces that looks like runes but isn't like any runic script ever seen before; light-skinned tribes in various places around the continent who speak what

appear to be broken dialects of Welsh and Gaelic; mounds throughout the Mississippi valley that pretty obviously were never built by Indians and are filled with hollow chambers, all empty; pictures on cave walls and drawn in petrified wood that are far too old to fit into any accepted prehistoric narrative, that show things nobody back then should have been seeing, like men in space suits and things in the sky.

"It's not just in North America we get this kind of anomalous stuff, but down in South America too," Jason went on. "What the hell was the true story behind those long-eared stone heads on Easter Island with red top-knots, the ones that Polynesian legend says were built by white-skinned, blue-eyed people who came on great magical rafts from the land beyond the rising sun? No one has yet figured out who built the ruined city at Tihuanaco, in Bolivia. In the 1940s a scientist who dated the ruins as being fifteen thousand years old was shouted down and silenced with the full force of the entire academic establishment. Since then anyone who has dared to point out that these huge stone walls and monoliths are completely different from Inca mud bricks just bought himself a ticket to teaching high school for the rest of his career. No one has yet explained the Nazca lines in Peru, complex and geometrically perfect geoglyphs of animals laid down like a modern highway on a great plateau that can only been seen and recognized *from the air.* They weren't even discovered for what they were until an American archaeologist looking for Inca sites flew over them in 1940. To this day, no one has the slightest clue as to who made them, or how, or why, or who the hell was supposed to see them. All over the world there are tantalizing hints of unknown civilizations pre-dating recorded history."

"Are we talking about Atlantis?" asked Bob, arching his eyebrows.

"Who knows?" said Jason with a shrug. "Yeah, I know, the absolute quickest way for anybody in the scientific or academic community to be written off as a crank and a lunatic is to so much as even *whisper* the forbidden A-word. Don't worry, I won't do so around our foreign guests. I do have that much sense, at least. But Plato wasn't the only ancient author who recorded folklore about lost continents and civilizations. And don't even get me started on the Aztec Quetzalcoatl legend. But the one thing every legend and myth and fragment of evidence agrees

on is that these ancient people, whatever else they were, were also *white*. White skin, red or golden hair along with blue or green eyes have *always* been associated with divine origin in the mythology of every culture. The far past is a gigantic Christmas package that liberal Political Correctness has nailed shut and sealed in shrink-wrap to make sure nobody ever opens it. Here today, we just punched a tiny hole in the shrink-wrap around our past." Jason pointed to the tiny twisted green object on the paper.

"Those damned Jews and those damned self-hating white bastards who shill for them!" muttered Campbell. "God, the arrogance of it! If they can't have mankind's past for themselves, nobody can. The very idea of truth for its own sake seems to have vanished from their consciousness. Wonder what they're so afraid we'll find if we ever do open the package?"

"Way too many blue eyes for their taste, I suspect," chuckled Jason.

"Kind of like that old nursery rhyme or whatever it is," said Bob.

"There was a man upon the stair,
A little man who wasn't there.
He wasn't there again today.
I wish that man would go away!"

"Yeah, well, looks like the little man who wasn't there was a fisherman," said Ally, coming up to them.

"It's really a fishing hook?" Jason asked her.

"No question," she said with a nod "There's no eyelet, probably too complex to make with whatever tools they had that could work the copper, but there's a T-bar at the top of the shank to allow for a line of sinew or gut to be attached, and a triangular barb on the point."

"I know it has to be carbon-dated in the lab, but any preliminary guess as to age?" asked Jason.

"Late Level Two, so let's say between five and six thousand years, give or take," she speculated.

"And the oldest Official Version metalworking civilizations?" queried Jason.

"Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia seem to be tied," Ally replied. "Metalworking supposedly began about five and a half thousand years ago, halfway around the world. The oldest recovered examples of primitive metal tools and weapons are about five thousand years old, copper and bronze and tin. Gold and jade jewelry, maybe a little older. The oldest non-petro human artifacts we have are pottery shards from the Ubaid period in ancient Sumeria, which was over seven thousand years ago, and the Sumerians were definitely a Semitic people, so the noseys may have us beat on that one, but no metal shows up until many thousands of years later. That dinky little hook may well turn out to be the oldest metal artifact worked by human hands ever discovered, and it most definitely should *not* have been discovered in Montana. Fortis and Wyrick are almost gibbering over it."

"They're coming to gibber at us now, in fact," observed Campbell.

Alvin Fortis was pale and his khaki work shirt soaked through with sweat. Amanda Wyrick's normally handsome face was pale, her lips compressed, almost hysterical-looking. "Chancellor Stockdale, do you understand the significance of this find?" Fortis asked in a tremulous voice.

"Yes, sir, I do," said Jason. "I'm not an archaeologist or a historian myself, but since I've become involved in this project I've learned a lot."

"Please, don't take offense, but I have to ask—this is such an earth-shattering development—can you give me some kind of assurance that no one here in your country could possibly have any, uh, political motivations to, how can I put this, *enhance* this site?"

Jason shook his head. "No offense taken, Doctor Fortis. We understand that you don't trust us or anything we do. That is how you have been conditioned to think from birth, where you come from. No, no one in the Northwest Republic is in any way seeding the site or tampering with any of the archaeological record here. I know you won't believe this, Doctor Fortis, but we *don't lie* to people. We don't have to, because we're right. Our nation and our way of life is based on truth, not deception. That is why we left your own empire, so that we could live like that."

"Then you won't have any objection if we monitor the carbon-dating process from the beginning?" asked Amana Wyrick.

"Not at all, ma'am," replied Jason. "In fact, I wish you would. It's why you're here. Ma'am, please don't think we don't understand what we're asking you to do. We are asking you to go back to where you came from and speak the truth about what you've seen here, and we understand that in your society that can be a deadly dangerous thing to do. It will require immense moral and personal courage, in some ways just as much courage as it took for a small handful of people from my generation to take up arms against the most powerful and overwhelming tyranny in human history. Can you do it?" he asked her bluntly.

"I have to be honest with you, Chancellor," the woman said, looking him in the eye. "I don't know. I always wondered if something like this happened, if I had the strength to commit professional hara-kiri for the sake of the truth. Up until now the question has always been academic, since Bella and I have stuck to nice politically safe Maya ruins and Khmer temples and West African slave trading forts where there really are European male villains who can be blamed and vilified without fudging history too much."

"I thought the slaves were sold into bondage by their own chiefs?" said Campbell mildly. "Not to mention the slave trade being mostly financed by Jews, and the slaves transported mainly on Jewish-owned ships."

"*Shhh!*" said Dr. Wyrick, holding her finger to her lips. "Chancellor Stockdale, if you can convince me that this find alone is real and you guys aren't pulling some kind of racist hoax here, it will be hard for me to plunge the metaphorical sword into my vitals and disembowel myself. I don't know if I can lose everything I've got for the sake of a little twisted piece of copper that may turn out to be nothing. But if we find other evidence in the coming weeks, especially once we crack that mound over there, and I am convinced it's all on the up and up, then yes, I will be forced to speak the truth out loud. And I will admit to you, Mr. Stockdale, that prospect scares me shitless."

* * *

The copper hook was deposited and sealed in a sample box, the paper seal signed and dated by Dr. Wingard, and most of the Eminent Persons accompanied it back up to Missoula in convoy for testing. Dr. Haskins, Dr. Fortis, Doctor Kellerman, Dr. Wyrick, and both Martineaus would follow the carbon-14 dating procedure with eagle eyes the next day in Dr. Ian Shardlake's lab at UM. Bob gave Captain Tom Horakova a call from the site office up on the rise above the longhouse and let him know the artifact was on its way. "I made sure Bobby's driving the University's van with the package in it," he told Horakova, referring to his son. "He's got one of the grad students with him and none of the foreigners, so they won't have any way to get at it during the trip. They're following behind in their own cars."

"Did any of them object, want to ride with the box?" asked Tom.

"No," Campbell told him. "Shardlake knows it's on its way. Tell Leigh Anne it goes right into the safe until Shardlake formally unseals it tomorrow morning to begin the testing, and every alarm and monitoring camera in the lab needs to be up and running. This is a big discovery, one that our arthropod friend and anybody working with him will want to discredit like hell. We want to make sure it's still there in the morning." Campbell was referring to Leigh Anne Tremblay, one of his new detectives, who had been assigned to security duty in the lab, although for the purposes of this assignment her name on her ID tag was Leigh Anne Summers. Guardswoman Tremblay had been selected because of her unique combination of linguistic talents. The daughter of French Canadian migrants, she had been born in Montreal, and she still spoke French with her family at home. She could therefore eavesdrop on the Martineaus.

The remainder of the group out at Lost Creek continued with the excavation of the longhouse site under Arne Wingard's supervision, grid square by grid square, slowly troweling up the dirt and dropping it into the sieves for sifting. The depressed rectangle slowly deepened. Ally excused herself and went back to work. Bob and Jason joined a group of the foreign scholars who were watching from behind the yellow nylon that roped off the dig area, since they were forbidden by their own governments actually to help in the excavation in any way. So far none of them had yielded to the temptation to get into the pit and start

sifting. "How can carbon dating work on metal?" Bob asked Letitia Haines. "I thought something had to be organic, like wood or bone, so as to have carbon atoms whose half-life could be determined."

"Oh? Do they teach organic chemistry at your police academies?" asked the Haines woman with a smile.

"No, just something I picked up with a budding young archaeologist around the house a lot," said Bob, nodding toward Allura.

"Copper is an element, and so radiocarbon dating won't work on pure copper, of course, but completely pure metal of any kind very rarely occurs in nature or even artificially," she told him. "Carbon is the basic building block of life, Colonel, and carbon atoms or isotopes can be found everywhere. Carbon atoms tend to bond with almost anything through exposure to the air, which contains carbon dioxide and other molecules plus all kinds of microscopic floating plant and animal particulates. Most metal implements contain a measurable carbon content from the smelting or manufacturing process. If that hook was worked from a raw copper nugget using a wooden tool there will be carbon from the wood. If it was cut or worked from a smelted lump or ingot, there will be carbon from the wood in the fire. Even the most expert craftsman can't keep carbon out. It gets into everything. Carbon content of steel is one way of dating weapons and armor and whatnot. That green corrosion on the hook will contain carbon dioxide and minute traces of everything from pollen to pine needles to human perspiration and skin molecules from handling. We won't be able to date the copper in the hook itself, per se, but we *will* be able to date the microscopic film of various particulates that adhere to the artifact's surface. That is, presuming your laboratory is as good as ours at Cambridge."

"Is it? I've no idea."

"Apparently," she said, nodding. "You have subatomic spectroscopic analysis equipment and procedures which actually seem a bit better than ours, if I may be so indiscreet as to mention it, and Doctor Shardlake's qualifications from MIT would seem to be sterling."

"I'm not the one you have to worry about being indiscreet around, Doctor Haines," said Campbell.

"Yes, Andrew Renfrew was telling us about your little spy hunt," said the Englishwoman with a smile.

Damnation! thought Campbell to himself. Aloud he said, "That was very gregarious of him. But you have to admit that we have reason to be concerned."

"Do you?" Letitia asked archly.

"Yes, ma'am," put in Jason Stockdale. "You mentioned just now that in order to determine the precise age of that bit of copper we found, you have to analyze and look at microscopic layers of gunk and goo that have been deposited down through the centuries?"

"Yes, that's correct," she agreed.

"I know enough to understand that even the slightest touch from an ungloved human hand might be enough to contaminate and corrupt the results, and make accurate or at least certifiably reliable dating impossible. So you can see why we're a bit concerned about the possible motives of some of you, just as you may think we're seeding the site and trying to put a hoax over on the world to prove our people were here first. In fact, I'm sure your own authorities back home made it clear to all of you that was what you're *supposed* to think."

"So we don't trust you, and you don't trust us? Is that it, Chancellor?" Haines asked him.

"Unfortunately, ma'am, the real world we live in is one of mutual mistrust," said Jason with a somber nod. "I hope that will change someday. Whether you accept the fact or not, we really are brother and sister, racially speaking. One day I believe that bond will transcend all this other petty cr-rubbish," he concluded.

"I'm English, Colonel. You can say crap around me, although where I come from it's shite. So, any suspects as to which of us is the Scarlet Pimpernel?"

"Honestly, Doctor Haines?" replied Robert Campbell. "We have no idea, and of course it's possible that none of you has any hidden agenda at all and we are simply being paranoid. I hope so. Unfortunately, paranoia is part of a detective's job description."

"Of course," she said. "Politics really is a bore sometimes, don't you think?"

Campbell and Jason Stockdale strolled away. "It seems that Scottie has queered our pitch, as the Brits say," Campbell muttered.

"Think it might have been deliberate, him tipping them off like that?" asked Jason. "Putting them all on their guard?"

"Maybe," said Campbell. "Or maybe it's just as Renfrew said a while ago, and these are intelligent people who pay attention to what's going on around them, and who are capable of sussing out the political implications of what they're doing. But now that he *has* put them all on their guard, that's going to make things more difficult. It's especially going to make any of them who are wearing multiple hats twitchy about contacting Scorpius."

"Isn't that the Sutcliffe woman over there?" asked Jason, pointing over to the site's generator and main receiver shack. A Northwest Power and Light truck was parked in front of it. Bella Sutcliffe was talking to a man in overalls standing by the truck. "Wonder why she's interested in the site's electric supply instead of the digging?"

"Let's see if we can find out." They walked over to the power truck. Bella Sutcliffe was looking over an NP&L maintenance manual the engineer had given her. She was dressed in jeans and a denim work shirt, her black hair in a pony tail. The technician was a stocky man in his mid-fifties, gray-headed, with horn-rimmed spectacles, which were unusual in the Republic since eye defects were usually routinely corrected through laser surgery in childhood. The name tag sewed onto on his coveralls read *Dave*.

"Aha, you caught me spying, Colonel!" she said, looking up and giggling. "Congratulations! Take me, I'm yours!"

"Thanks a lot, Renfrew!" muttered Campbell to Jason *sotto voce*. Aloud he said, "There's nothing confidential about the Tesla power transmission system, ma'am. Your country has access to all the right technology, indeed they had it before the Northwest Republic even came into existence, and they can read that manual you've got there on NP&L's website, so there's no need to smuggle it back to Harvard in your underwear."

"I have better things to put in my underwear than technical manuals, Colonel, believe me," said Bella sunnily. "Yes, we know how Tesla power transmission works in America, broadcasting electricity through

the air. The problem is we still have to rely on fossil fuel to generate the power before we broadcast it. It's so much neater and cleaner than all those tangled-up power lines. We even have a few small Tesla-powered communities. I live in one in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and it's really nice not to have all those unsightly poles and pylons and cables and transformers cluttering up the horizon and ruining the view."

"I've heard," said Jason. "The United States is now dotted with fortified compounds for your super-wealthy liberal and Jewish élites, each with its own Tesla grid, while the bulk of your population of all colors has to make do with a crumbling copper-wire electrical grid of underground and aboveground cables both, powered by diesel and coal-fired generating stations, the whole of which is anywhere from sixty to a hundred and twenty years old, and just barely works. The Canadians are a little better off, but not much. Is there any major city in the U.S. that doesn't have rolling blackouts in high summer and deep winter because your system can't function at peak demand any more?"

"Probably not," admitted Bella. "Of course, if you guys would be so kind as to share the secret of cold fusion with us, it would certainly make life a lot more comfortable in the States."

"Why would we want to make it comfortable for you, ma'am?" inquired Campbell with a wintry smile. "We've told the governments of the so-called democracies repeatedly that we are willing to let the rest of the world in on everything we've got—cold fusion, levitational transportation, cancer cures, Tesla power, even certain parts of our space technology—in exchange for a simple recognition of the fact that we *exist,* and we are going to continue to exist as a nation. But no, that's too much to ask. Over thirty years after the Longview Treaty, *one* nation, Russia, now has a full embassy in the Republic. Four others have consular delegations—Ireland, Argentina, Chile, and Serbia. Everybody else still has their noses in the air pretending we're just dog doo they will someday scrape off their shoe."

"Since you will only allow predominantly white nations to recognize you, of which there are almost none remaining in the world, I can see why the list is a little limited," said Bella. "What about China, India, the Southern African Union, Korea and Japan? The problem with that is you'd have to let them send you ambassadors and allow at least a few

privileged people with different skin colors live here in your precious lily-white paradise. What would you do? Build separate bathrooms and water fountains for a handful of diplomats?"

"Actually, it *is* rather a paradise, and we mean to keep it that way," replied Jason, grinning. "Southern Africa is a Chinese puppet régime that actively persecutes its few remaining white people, so they can keep their gold and their diamonds and their chromium. We'll get it elsewhere, or do without. The Russians speak here for the Chinese, in anything that requires any interaction with them, which isn't much. We still haven't forgotten the way they loaded up that beaner zoo to the south of us with a thousand combat helicopters in the months before the Seven Weeks. The Irish broker any necessary deals with the Japanese, and the Indian government is so riddled with corruption and intrigue that neither the Russkis or the Chinks will have anything to do with them, never mind us. Believe me, it takes a lot to convince the Chinese, of all people, that a nation is too fundamentally dishonest to do business with, but India has managed it.

"The Americans, the Canadians, the Brits and other Europeans, the Aussies and Kiwis, even the damned Icelanders, we've laid it all out for you. We want only one thing. Full recognition. Accept the verdict of history, send us diplomatic missions with personnel who comply with our Constitution and our laws, and you've got everything from Northwest cancer medicine to Northwest wheat, Northwest engineers and money to rebuild infrastructure like highways and power and clean water filtration, stuff that will benefit niggers and Mexicans and keep them quiet, and we won't even care so long as it benefits a few white people as well. Yeah, we're prepared to compromise that far. We'll feed and cure a hundred picaninnies and bambinos just to feed and cure a single white child, even if it's the child of raving liberals who hate us, because that's what the Republic is about, securing the existence of our people and a future for white children. But nope, you guys ain't having any."

"According to our orientation back in Washington, D.C., when you people go off on wild tirades like that we're supposed to smile and change the subject," said Bella Sutcliffe.

"How?" asked Campbell in amusement.

"Very carefully, because you're dangerous psychopaths who live in a culture of violence where weapons-carrying is actually encouraged, and you respond to difference of opinion by acting out with potentially lethal consequences."

"That sounds like a direct quote from an ONR lecture," remarked Bob.

"It is," replied Bella. "Seriously, I suppose I'd better climb down. For all I know the ONR is right and you may really shoot me. I just love pushing the envelope. They find any more interesting and anomalous artifacts over there?" she asked, pointing to the dig site.

"Not yet, I don't think," said Jason. "Your boss Doctor Wyrick went back to the university so she can watch the carbon dating process on the fish hook tomorrow. I'm surprised you didn't go with her."

"She left me behind here to spy on you!" whispered Bella conspiratorially. "Thanks for the chat, Dave." She slid past them and headed back toward the crowd around the dig site.

"You can tell she's still got those Jewish chromosomes in there somewhere," remarked Jason thoughtfully. "She seems to have this irresistible urge to get in our faces, as if she can't help it. Like it's instinctual."

"Pushing the envelope, she called it," said Campbell. "Let's hope she doesn't push too far and really piss somebody off to the point where he kneecaps her. That's all we need. The Political Bureau would have conniption fits." He pulled his CID shield from his pocket and flashed it at the Northwest Power and Light technician. "You're from the Anaconda transmitter?" he asked.

"Yeah, Colonel," said the tech. "Working out of Anaconda this week, anyway. I travel a lot. I'm actually based out of Coeur d'Alene and I hit south Montana every couple of months. Name's Dave Speidel, senior field inspector."

"What was the lady with the mouth on her talking to you about?"

"The Tesla generator," replied Speidel. "She was curious about how it worked, and so I ran it down for her. Like you said, it's not as if it's a state secret any more. I helped install this unit and I'm here to check out the calibration on the receptor cells and make sure they're still spot on. The

plates on these new T-Twelve mobile units have a tendency to slip out of synch sometimes, and it cuts into the pulse conversion ratio. These are okay, they're converting at about eighty percent, which is about as good as you're going to get this far away from the pulse source. I'll fine-tune the antenna a bit as well." He pointed to the twelve-foot tall reception dish assembly on top of the shed. "When they get that next series of relay towers up between Anaconda and Butte you'll be able to pull down ninety-six or ninety-seven percent, if you're still out here then."

"NP&L says we'll have the whole country covered within four years, right?" asked Jason curiously.

"More like three," said Speidel proudly.

"That was all she was talking about? The Tesla?" asked Campbell.

"Yeah, pretty much. Oh, she dropped a few off-putting remarks that made it clear she thinks we're all a bunch of dumb rubes, but I know she's from Out There, and they're all assholes by nature, so I didn't bite. That all you want to know, Colonel? I also need to check on your alcohol back-up generator while I'm out here, so in case anything goes wrong at the transmitter or with this unit here, you won't be without power."

"Sounds good," said Jason with a nod. "Thank you, Comrade."

"Uh, I'm not a Party member," said Speidel, eyeing Jason Stockdale's Old NVA ribbon and Bob's Party pin with embarrassment. "Just never was all that into politics. Never could find the time."

"Citizen?" asked Bob.

"That I am," he returned with some pride. "Second class. I was a tech sergeant in the Luftwaffe during the second war. Worked on Bluelight and V-3 launch systems."

"Well, then, you did your bit, citizen," said Bob. "Most people in the Republic aren't Party members. Nothing to be ashamed of."

As they were walking back to the main dig, Jason asked, "Now why would La Sutcliffe be interested in the site's electric power source?"

"It may be nothing, but I think her raven locks just rose a bit higher on the radar than the rest of them," replied Campbell.

"Ironic if you of all people were to be the man who caught a female spy," remarked Jason. "Then you'll have seen the same game from both sides."

"Not really a spectator sport," replied Bob. "Nor one I like playing, either, on any side."

There were no more major finds that day, just a collection of animal bones and a nondescript flint blade. About 7 p.m. the dig shut down for the night. The students got back into their vans for the drive into Anaconda or all the way back to Missoula, as the case might be, while the remaining Eminent Persons piled into their cars to follow Ally back to the government guest house about eight miles from the dig site. Their luggage had already been deposited there that morning and they had all been assigned rooms. This particular establishment was the former Fairmont Hot Springs resort hotel, a pleasant hostelry set in a wide valley with both an indoor and an outdoor swimming pool. It was rumored that the last American owners, a Hindu couple, hadn't gotten the NVA's message in time and were buried somewhere on the property.

Jason Stockdale and Bob Campbell drove back into Missoula together. It was almost a hundred miles, but although Old Interstate 90, now National Highway 12, had not yet been refitted with levitational magneto strips, after the Seven Weeks' war the highway had been re-built, re-graded, and re-finished as well as expanded to eight lanes, leaving plenty of room. Lack of speed limits combined with Northwest hi-tech engine performance meant that they were back home in a little over an hour.

Bob got up early the next morning. His wife Millie and youngest daughter Maggie, aged fourteen, came into the breakfast room as he was on his second cup of coffee. Maggie Campbell and Melanie Stockdale were friends and would be starting at Samuel Johnson High together in September. "Are you going back up to Anaconda today, Dad?" asked Maggie. "If you are, can you bring me and Mel along? We want to see the dig. It's on TV and in the papers, but Mel's father won't take us."

"Mel's father and I were up there together yesterday, but he's right, honey, we've got business to take care of, and we wouldn't be able to show you the site properly. Not that I would be all that sure what's worth seeing and what isn't. But we'd rather you girls not be running around loose up there and getting into things. It's actually a pretty sensitive site in the national sense. Tell you what, I'll speak to Ally. She

and Bobby Three are working on the dig together, and I'll make sure they can make the time to give you two a tour in a few days, okay?"

"Are you going to see Tom today?" asked Millie.

"Probably," her husband told her.

"Do *not* let him forget the shoot-out Friday night," she reminded him. "Eli insists he can win the Little Willie and Marie thinks he can too, and it would be a shame for his father to miss it."

Tom's fifteen-year-old son Eli, named after his grandfather, was competing in the Young Pioneers' Southern Montana District riflery competition. His specialty was Little Willie, a target game fired at 50 yards on a regulation competition range. It featured three steel armor plates in the design of an old-style American judge in a black robe with a gavel, a large-nosed Jewish attorney with a briefcase, and a sinister-looking FBI agent in sunglasses. The Little Willie was a smaller, mobile target in the shape of a sniveling, cretinous little man, sometimes enhanced with sound effects such as cackling insane laughter or farts, along with a satisfying, pig-like squeal when it was hit. Little Willie moved on an electric or sometimes hand-hauled rail between the three shields, legs and arms pumping, at varying speeds. The object was to hit the creepy thing as it flashed briefly in the open, running back and forth to hide behind the judge and his gavel, or the attorney and his briefcase, or the federal agent. This was harder than it sounds, even at a mere 50 yards, because the target flitted back and forth very quickly between shields in a random pattern chosen by the range operator. The Pioneers demanded each marksman use a bolt-action .22-caliber rifle with a 20-round magazine. This meant the marksman had to fire, chamber another round, and re-sight on the speeding little eedjit. It was a hard shoot, and perfect scores of 20 hits were rare enough to make the sports pages of the local paper. Eli had managed it once since he was twelve years old.

"I'll make sure Tom doesn't forget," said Bob. His phone bleeped; he pulled it out of his belt clip and saw it was Tom Horakova. "Well, speak of the devil!" He flipped the phone open. "Top of the morning to you, Thomas!"

"Top of my ass!" swore Tom into the phone, which was unusual for anyone of his generation.

"I beg your pardon?" said Jason.

"We both need to get down to the Fairmont Lodge, now!" said Horakova. "Meet me at the cop shop. Never mind the Heep, I've already laid on a Guard helicopter for us."

"What's happened?" demanded Jason.

"Bella Sutcliffe," said Tom tersely. "She was found floating in the pool this morning, dead."

"She drowned?" asked Jason, stunned.

"No. Strangled first. I'll bet my shirt this is Scorpius! Instead of using one of the Eminent Persons as an accomplice to fool around with the bits and pieces of old bones and whatnot on the site, stuff only eggheads would understand, he's splattered the whole project with murder!"

XXVII

Death and the Maiden

(32 years, seven months, and nine days after Longview)

Take thy fortune; thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
—Hamlet: Act III, Scene 4

The Civil Guard helicopter was warming up on the pad outside the station when Bob arrived and parked his car. He hopped into the aircraft beside Tom Horakova, fastened his seat belt, and a minute later they were in the air and headed southeast. "Who's the primary on the scene?" asked Bob.

"One of your guys from the Anaconda detachment, a Detective Sergeant MacPherson," replied Horakova.

"Yeah, I know Mac. He's sharp and efficient. What do we know so far? First off, who found the body?"

"A couple of Labor Service kids working at the guest house. They went in to the indoor pool about six thirty this morning for a quick dip, and they saw her floating in the deep end. They pulled her out, and the boy tried to resuscitate her, but she was long gone. I had a word with the Anaconda station commander last night, advising him that we were keeping an eye on our special guests out at the Fairmont and they should contact me if there were any problems, so I got the call about six forty-five. The local medical examiner will also be there by now, a Doctor Cantone."

"Yeah, I know him, too," said Campbell. He took out his phone, called the Anaconda Civil Guard station, and had them patch him through to Sergeant MacPherson at the Fairmont lodge. He spoke at some length with MacPherson and the police doctor, then closed his phone. "Cantone ballparks time of death at around midnight. Bella

Sutcliffe was strangled with a thin cord or wire, a garrote. No weapon was found on the scene. No defensive wounds, nothing under her nails. No obvious sign of sexual assault. Looks like it all happened quick, neat, and clean. The body was then dumped in the pool."

"Probably so the long soak would wash off as many forensic traces as possible," said Horakova. "A garrote sounds like a trained ONR assassin. Our buddy Scorpius, most likely."

Campbell nodded. "Could be. She was last seen in the hotel bar at about eleven, knocking back Blue Goose cocktails like they were going out of style."

"What the hell is a Blue Goose?" asked Horakova.

"Kind of a half-assed martini made out of vodka, lime juice, and some kind of liqueur," Campbell told him. "By all accounts so far, she held it pretty well and she wasn't visibly drunk when she left the bar."

"Alone?" asked Horakova.

"Mac didn't want to commit himself on that, since he hasn't had time to run down all the witnesses. She changed out of the jeans and denim blouse she was wearing at the dig site yesterday, and she was wearing a dark maroon single-piece summer dress and high heels, which is what she died in. The shoes were at the bottom of the pool. Mac says he gave her room a quick once-over, but nothing obviously hinky jumped out at him. No sign of a struggle in there, so she was presumably done in by the pool, or nearby. He's canvassing the staff and the guests now. We'll check them all out, of course, but obviously we'll be especially interested in the EPs who were staying overnight at the guest house. Some of them were there last night, and some of them drove back into Missoula yesterday and spent the night there to be present at the carbon dating of that fish hook we found. That would be our Oxford don Fred Haskins, Doctor Fortis, Doctor Wyrick, Doctor Kellerman, and both the Martineaus. The assistants Renfrew, Tarricone, and Haines were staying overnight at the lodge where the killing took place. Your people are tracking all their GPIs from the BOSS office tech room, right? Vehicles, American FLEC cards, and their American and Euro personal chips? You need to check and make sure none of them drove back to Anaconda last night."

"Already done, first thing after I got the call," said Tom. "Some movement around town to restaurants and such, but no one left Missoula. Among the Anaconda contingent, no one left the Fairmont after eight p.m. or so. Doctor Arne Wingard was there as well, although we can't account for his movements, since the Republic isn't in the habit of planting tracking chips on our own people like they were exotic wildlife whose migration patterns we want to study."

"Wingard didn't go back to Missoula?" asked Campbell in some surprise.

"No, but that's not unusual," Tom told him. "He has his own suite at the Fairmont, to save travel time to and from Lost Creek, which is understandable since he's always the first on site in the morning and generally the last to leave. Hmm . . . look, I don't think it's one of the EPs, I think it's Scorpius himself. We know he was already here before they arrived. It has to be a local. Jesus, you don't think Arne Wingard is Scorpius, do you?"

"I doubt it," replied Campbell, shaking his head. "I took a look at his file when this business first came up, just for background. Wingard is a genuine political refugee: there's still a euro-warrant out on him for inciting to ethnocentrism, whatever the hell that means. He Came Home fifteen years ago and he brought his wife and two children with him. His wife died of a brain hemorrhage four years ago. His son and daughter are both grown and married, and he has grandchildren. He appears absolutely dedicated to his work and the university, and Ally thinks the world of him. He would have to be one hell of a long-term sleeper agent with an elaborately faked background, inserted years before anyone anywhere had any idea where the hell Lost Creek even was, never mind what was under it. While we both know that's possible, in fact Wingard has been the guy who's ramrodded the whole Lost Creek project from the get-go, assembled and published all the evidence, and who pushed for this whole Eminent Persons visit to try and authenticate the discoveries here. If his secret mission is to bury the truth about our Aryan ancestors here in America, he's going about it in a strange way, when there were a dozen other means by which he could have sabotaged the project from the inside."

"I just mentioned it because if the killer of Bella Sutcliffe is Scorpius, he'll be a local with some kind of access to or inside knowledge of the dig," said Tom.

"Mmm, yeah, but I've been thinking about that. Just because somebody has access to the data here, and transmitted it to the ONR, doesn't mean they necessarily have access to the site itself. We may have to cast our net a bit wider, look for somebody at the University, most likely a recent arrival, in the past year or so," suggested Campbell. "Somebody in the records or cataloging or clerical end who has or was able to get access to the data."

"Coming into the Fairmont Lodge helipad, sir," said the pilot into the headphones over their ears.

"Good," said Campbell. "Let's see what this mess looks like close up."

The first thing they saw from the air was a parking lot full of Civil Guard vehicles with flashing green and blue LED lights. The copter landed on a pad just beyond the outdoor pool, which was naturally heated by the former resort's well-known hot springs. Detective Sergeant MacPherson and his partner, a South African detective named Roelof Botha, came out to meet them. The men shook hands. "Damn! Got the Chief of Ds himself out for this one!" said MacPherson, a lanky Montana native dressed in civilian jeans and jacket with sharp-toed leather cowboy boots and a Stetson hat. Botha was a lean, blond young Afrikaner in simple work trousers and a windbreaker.

"How you been doing, Mac?" asked Campbell.

"Oh, I'm able to sit up and take a little nourishment from time to time."

"This is Captain Tom Horakova, Bureau of State Security," said Bob as they walked toward the hotel's main building.

"Yeah, I heard the trenchcoats were on this," said MacPherson, shaking Tom's hand. "You really think this was done by an honest-to-God enemy agent?"

"I think it's probable," Tom told them. "A man or possibly a woman using the code name Scorpius. We don't know much about him, but we know he's been nosing around the Lost Creek archaeological site

and transmitting just about everything there is to know about the dig to the ONR in La Cesspool Grande."

"*Damn!*" swore MacPherson angrily. Bob and Tom noted he wore the Seven Weeks' ribbon over his left front pocket. Anyone who had been through the war and seen the shells and bombs and missiles crashing into the Homeland had no time at all for America or America's spies. "I have to say I'm not completely surprised. This was a cold kill. Northwesters who get ticked off at other people tend to use guns, or sometimes axes or Bowie knives if they're in a more hands-on frame of mind. A noose isn't really indigenous to our rambunctious lifestyle here in the Republic. If you're right, why did this Scorpius character kill Miss Sutcliffe? Was she tied in with him in some way?"

"We've no idea," said Bob. "That's what we have to find out."

"Where do you want to start?" asked MacPherson.

"At the beginning, where else?" replied Bob.

Bella Sutcliffe's body was lying beside the indoor pool, covered with a green plastic sheet. MacPherson flicked back the sheet and Bob and Tom studied the dead face for a moment. Bella's tongue protruded from between her teeth, a bright cyanosed blue, and her eyes were red from the petichial hemorrhaging caused by the tightening noose. "Guess she pushed one envelope too many," commented Tom.

"Guess so," replied Campbell. "Did you find her purse, Mac?"

"Found on the floor leaning against the wall, over there," replied MacPherson. "Just the usual items except for a packet of Chinese-manufactured condoms, which is weird. What the hell is a man gonna think of a woman who carries those things around with her? Why didn't she just hang a sign around her neck saying *I'm a slut and I come prepared*?"

"It's normal in her culture," explained Campbell. "They've abolished sluts by making all women that way. I Am Womyn, Hear Me Roar and all that horse hockey. Be glad it wasn't certain other items. Find her phone?"

"In the purse," replied Mac.

"Dump it and check the whole chip, phone calls, stored, data, everything," ordered Bob.

"Waiting on the tech officer and his magic box now, Colonel."

Campbell looked up at Dr. Edward Cantone, the Anaconda Guard detachment's medical examiner and pathologist, a regular doctor who also worked in the town's clinic and took private patients as well. There weren't enough homicides to give him full-time employment with the Guards. Cantone's qualifications would not have been recognized anywhere else in the world, because he was a graduate of Portland Medical University's medical school. PMU provided a stripped-down four-year course that actually taught doctors how to treat injuries and heal sick people, as opposed to the American system of eight years in school, two as an intern, and then specialization in some obscure part of the body to try and pay off a million-dollar student loan debt sometime before they were 45. The American Medical Association contemptuously referred to Northwest medicos as "Doc In The Box" and "paramedics with delusions of grandeur." The fact that Northwest medical researchers had discovered the cure for most forms of cancer and were working on the rest was simply ignored as Nazi propaganda. "On the phone you said no sign of sexual assault, Eddie?" asked Campbell.

"Doesn't look like it," replied Dr. Cantone, a stocky man of about 40.

"Consensual sex recently?" asked Tom Horakova. "Her BOSS file says this lady preferred quantity to quality, and the condoms bear that out."

"Yeah, I heard you boys were in on this one," said Cantone. "Can't tell you here. Let me get her to town for a full workup and I'll let you know, but off the bat I'd say no. No mystery on the cause of death. One look at that tongue and those eyes tells the tale."

"Any ideas on the ligature, Ed?" asked MacPherson.

"Thin. Not wire like a proper assassin's garrote. Probably something simple like nylon clothesline or even twine, something that would look innocuous if you find it in somebody's kitchen drawer or garage workshop. When I get her on the table back at the morgue I'll see if any fibers were left in the wound, and I may be able to tell you if it was twine or just plain rope. One thing, though." Cantone leaned down and lifted the dead woman's chin, with some effort. "She's in full rigor now. The warm water and the fact that she was last seen alive at eleven makes me pretty sure she died fairly soon afterward, hence the midnight give-or-take TOD, but again, I'll be able to tell more after the autopsy.

Anyway, what I wanted to show you—see that bruise there just under the left jaw, about the side of a credit coin?" He pointed. "Not sure whether he used wooden grips on each end of the rope or some kind of knot or D-ring, but that was the actual pressure point for the noose. Not on the back of the neck. He didn't sneak up behind her. He strangled her from the front, so he could watch her face while she died, and his face was the last thing she ever saw. Sadistic bastard."

"Yeah, a real hero of the red, white, and blue," muttered Campbell in disgust. "Any chance she fought back, scratched him, got some blood or skin under her fingernails we can get DNA off of?"

"Not that I can see. If so, the hours in the water probably washed all the traces away, but of course I'll check carefully."

"Who found her exactly?" asked Campbell.

MacPherson consulted his notes. "Martin Swart and Erin Graham, both aged seventeen, Labor Service employed here at the lodge. The Swart boy is the landscape gardener and one of several general heft-and-tote helpers around the place, and Miss Graham is a waitress in the restaurant and receptionist as needed. They both live on the premises in the staff wing."

"Married?" asked Campbell.

"Not yet. No prom baby, either. They're planning on getting married once he gets through Army basic and gets his permanent duty station, then they're headed for university, UM or UW Pullman depending on what they want for their majors. The managers are a German immigrant couple named Thiessen, Gunther and Anna. He's retired military. Been running the place about four years."

"Where are the kids?" asked Campbell.

"In the office behind the reception desk, Colonel," MacPherson told him. "The Thiessens are in the manager's office."

"We'll talk to the kids first."

Martin Swart was a stocky blond boy and Erin Graham a slim teenaged brunette. They were wearing sweatshirts over their bathing suits, and seemed partly concerned and partly excited by having found themselves in the center of something major. The detectives introduced themselves. "*Waar in Suid-Afrika is jou gesin? Praat jy Engels*?" Detective Botha asked the boy.

"*Ja, meneer*, I speak English," replied Martin. "I was born in Bloemfontein, but when I was eight my family made it onto Mooney's List and we got out, so I learned here in Montana. That's why I don't sound like a Jaapie."

"You flew out with Captain Mooney?" asked MacPherson, impressed. "Over three hundred people crammed onto one sixty-year-old C-130?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy, and added nothing else. Mooney's long flight was legendary throughout the Republic.

"I thought all South Africans still spoke English," remarked Horakova.

"No, the ANC won't allow us to learn it now, said Swart. "We have to learn Zulu, Xhosa, or Swazi and speak it in public at all times."

"Okay, you guys found the dead woman? Tell us about it," said Campbell. "You went in for a swim about six thirty this morning?"

"Yes, Colonel," said Martin. "The pool doesn't open until seven, but the Thiessens don't mind if we get in a few lengths before that. Besides, most of the guests who want to swim early use the outdoor pool this time of year because of the hot springs. It's quite lekker, but the indoor pool is . . ."

"More private?" suggested Campbell.

"Yes, sir," replied Martin.

"Don't misunderstand, Colonel, Marty and I are both Christians and we're not doing anything we shouldn't," said the girl, blushing. "It's just that we're both competition grade swimmers. It's how we met, at Hemingway High in Boise. We have separate rooms, you know."

"None of our business, ma'am," replied Campbell. "We just need to know about your finding Miss Sutcliffe. She just checked in last night, but did you see her alive at any time before this morning?"

"I checked her in along with all the other foreigners, yes sir," said Erin.

"What was your impression of them coming in?" asked Tom Horakova.

"They were all excited about some hook they'd found out at the Lost Creek archaeology site," she said. "Their conversation I heard was all about that."

"How about Bella Sutcliffe?" asked Campbell.

"She seemed—kind of hyper," said the girl carefully. "I don't want to speak ill of the dead, really, but some of her comments were, well, off-color. Bawdy, I suppose you'd call them. Rabelaisian, if you want to get classical about it."

"Yes, I remember," replied Campbell with a sad chuckle. "Rabelaisian. I get the impression she would have liked that."

"Well, ladies aren't supposed to be Rabelaisian. Not here, anyway," said the girl primly.

"Did you see her at all after check-in?" asked Tom.

"No, sir," she said. "I got off at nine and went to the employees' lounge out back, and I read until ten and then I went to bed."

"Read what?" asked MacPherson curiously.

"Well, a Jean Plaidy novel," she said, slightly embarrassed.

"You're a seventeen-year-old girl, you're supposed to be a romantic," Campbell reassured her with a chuckle. "And you never saw Miss Sutcliffe again after you got off duty? Alive, I mean?"

"No, sir," said the girl.

"I did," said Martin. "I was helping out Mr. Thiessen behind the bar until ten and then I went to bed as well."

"We're told she left around eleven, so you didn't see her go?"

"No, sir."

"Who was tending bar when you left?" asked Tom.

"Gunther, that's Mr. Thiessen," he told them. "He and Anna, that's Mrs. Thiessen, take turns behind the bar on alternate nights."

"How was Miss Sutcliffe behaving when you were there?" asked Bob.

"Uh, generally she was kind of boisterous, not drunk, really, just kind of loud and brassy. Like you'd expect an American woman to act."

"Indeed," said Tom. "Was she talking to anyone in particular?"

"Mostly the other foreigners," said young Swart. "About archaeology and stuff. She also sat at one of the tables and talked with Doctor Wingard for a long while, about the same kind of stuff, carbon dating and stone tools and such, at least so far as I could hear."

"Who else was in the bar besides the foreign scientists?" asked Tom. "Just other guests here, or any local people?"

"Just residents, so far as I recall," said the boy. "This is a state guest house for people traveling on official business. Our lounge is just a little pub more for convenience than anything else, so the guests don't have to drive into town for a drink and a little company and a little music, not exactly a jumping joint. Sometimes local people come out here when they're invited by our residents, but there's a lot better pubs and caffs in Anaconda if they want to have a good time. No locals came in last night that I can remember."

"Meaning they were all Party or government people," said Tom with a significant glance at Bob. "All from out of town, though?"

"Yes sir," said Martin. "Let's see: there was the Jorgensons, husband and wife, who both work for the Education Ministry. They're some kind of accountants. There was Mr. Belizaire from the Ministry of Culture, and Mr. Fetterman and a couple of guys from the NBA, who are out here shooting background film for some program about early settlers in Montana, and some others. Mr. Thiessen would know who they are."

"Did Bella socialize with any of them?" asked Bob.

"She sat and talked with Mr. Speidel from Northwest Power and Light for a while," said Swart. "She was kind of flirty with him, but then she was like that with all the male patrons. I got the impression she just likes being around men. Liked, I should say. She didn't talk much with any of the women."

"Maybe we're looking for a jealous wife or girl friend?" suggested Botha.

"With a garrote in her purse?" asked Campbell. "I hope not. Wait a minute, you mentioned a Mr. Speidel? Dave Speidel, the Tesla power engineer?" He turned to Horakova. "Jason and I met him yesterday out at Lost Creek. He was talking to Bella Sutcliffe. He mentioned he actually works out of CdA, so he must stay here when he's in Anaconda."

"Yes, sir," said Swart. "He goes all up and down the eastern part of the country checking on remote reception towers out on farms and

ranches and such, doing any adjustments or minor repairs that need doing. He always stays here when he's in the area."

"Okay, thanks, guys," said Campbell. "We may want to talk to you again, but I think that about covers it." He turned to MacPherson. "Where's the manager's office?"

Gunther Thiessen turned out to be a slim man in his late fifties with an erect bearing and a handsome Teutonic face, simply but crisply dressed in sharp-creased trousers and windbreaker, with well-clipped gray hair. His wife Anna was a small woman of about the same age who managed to look energetic simply sitting down, and who immediately leaped up, poured four cups of latté coffee from a large pot and offered the police a large tray of cookies and strudel.

The office was paneled in oak and had its own fireplace. Campbell was struck by the wall over the mantelpiece, which was covered with Herr Thiessen's military memorabilia. He stepped over to look at the photographs and trophies, some clearly of Thiessen in his younger days, some of several young men in more modern NDF garb whom Campbell took to be Thiessen's sons, as well as a blonde girl with a small boy in her lap. The next thing that caught his eye was Thiessen's mounted plaque of decorations, including not one but two Iron Crosses, one from the Battle of Portland and one from the Seven Weeks' War. He nodded, impressed. Then he saw a shield with a coat of arms on the wall next to it, displaying an Iron Cross in the top left quarter, the letters "PG" in the lower left, a stylized bridge in the lower right, and in the top right the letters "SA" in Germanic Fraktur lettering. He whistled. "Herr Thiessen," he said, "Do I understand this correctly? You were one of the Stormtroopers in Baumgarten's original Panzer Grenadiers at the Battle of Portland? One of the first men over the barricades on the I-5 bridge?"

"*Ja*," said Thiessen. "Not so much a man, though. I vas seventeen years old, de exact same age as our young South African, Martin."

"The University's Chancellor Jason Stockdale was on the I-5 as well, a few companies behind you," said Tom.

"I know Comrade Stockdale. I meet him most years at our reunions."

"How did you end up in the PGs at such a young age?" asked Bob curiously. "How did you even get into the United States? I seem to recall that by then they had virtually halted all white immigration from Europe."

"I came from Stuttgart to New York on a false passport stating dat I was a Jewish rabbinical student named Isidore Weiss, a National Socialist inside joke which needless to say de stupid nigger immigration agent at de airport did not understand. I made my vay Nordvest, hoping to find de NVA somehow. For years all of de youth of Germany had vatched de news with joy and fascination, knowing dat here Aryan people vere fighting again against de darkness as our ancestors did. It became a kind of hope and contest among us, to find vays to get to America legally or otherwise, to get to de Nordvest and somehow become part of it. I arrived in Seattle during de July Days, when I heard Herr General Baumgarten was raising a German-speaking regiment, and so my timing turned out to be perfect. I stayed on in de NDF after independence, through de Seven Veeks."

"This says you were a sergeant-major on your retirement," commented Tom, looking at Thiessen's framed honorable discharge. "Why not an officer, with your background? If I may ask?"

"I am what our enemies sometimes refer to as a good German," replied Thiessen with a chuckle. "I preferred obeying orders to giving dem. Officers have too much to vorry about."

"Have you found out anything about who murdered that poor woman?" asked Anna Thiessen. Somewhat to his surprise, she had no accent at all.

"Not yet, ma'am," he replied. "It's early days yet, though. This is superb strudel, by the way. Cheese, not apple?"

"Yes," she said. "Topfenstrudel. I'm actually Austrian. Like the Führer."

"So how can ve help you to catch dis schvein?" asked Thiessen.

"We need to trace Miss Sutcliffe's last few hours. You were tending bar in your lounge last night until closing?" asked Campbell.

"Yes. I sent Martin off at ten. Young people need sleep."

"Miss Sutcliffe left the bar at around eleven?"

"About den, yes."

"She didn't leave with anyone in particular?" pressed Campbell.

"No, I'm sure of it," said Thiessen. "Vich rasser surprised me. One vould normally not speak so of a lady, but she seemed to be, how do de Americans put it, a panther on the hunt?"

"A cougar on the prowl," corrected Anna.

"I am not a prude, Colonel," said Thiessen. "Dese things are going to happen in any hotel. I do not meddle in my guests' affairs, in any sense of de term, so long as dey are discreet and do not offend the other guests by public display, although I do try to keep a fatherly eye on Martin and Erin and the other young people from de *Arbeitsdienst* who work here, who are perhaps not fully adult enough for such things. Lest I give de wrong impression, I must say that Miss Sutcliffe vas not drunk or offensive in any way, just rather outgoing, let us say."

"Who was still in the bar after she left?" asked Tom Horakova.

"Herr Doctor Wingard, de Scotsman Herr Doctor Renfrew, de American with de Italian name, Tarri-something, de English lady Doctor Haines, and Herr Speidel from de electric," recited Thiessen.

"All the other guests had left?" asked MacPherson.

"Yes. De Scotsman and de English woman were vere teaching de Italian how to play proper billiards, not pool, and talking about archaeology. Really a rather staid group."

"I don't imagine the lounge in a government guest house would get too boisterous," remarked Tom.

"You vould be surprised, Herr Captain," said Thiessen with a smile. "Sometimes we get vork crews from the highways or cowboys from cattle drives dropping in when they are camped nearby. Ve have had no serious trouble here, but I have a gun check in the lounge. You don't hand over your veapon, you don't drink here, and if I sink you are too drunk to be responsible, you don't get it back until you are sober." This was the one common-sense restriction on firearms the Northwest Republic allowed, in the face of some protest from the purists; proprietors and managers of any place that served alcohol had the right at their discretion to ban guns or require them to be checked at the door. Most did, since customers gunning one another down might make for exciting Western movies, but in real life it was bad for business. The Northwest Republic was a nation of gun enthusiasts, but

mostly responsible ones who understood that gunpowder and alcohol don't mix.

"Okay, who left after Miss Sutcliffe?" asked Campbell.

"I believe it vas Herr Speidel, a few minutes later," said Thiessen. Tom and Bob glanced at one another. Dave Speidel the power guy's name was popping up with strange frequency.

"You close at midnight?" asked MacPherson. "And you stayed behind for a few minutes locking up?"

"Yes, Detective Sergeant."

"That was about the time we believe the homicide may have occurred," said MacPherson. "The indoor pool is down that long hallway from reception, and the stairs and elevators are right by the reception desk. So if you stayed behind for a few minutes to close, you wouldn't have seen anybody slip down the corridor into the pool area?"

"Unfortunately not, I'm afraid," said Thiessen, shaking his head.

"We'll have to grill the hell out of all of them on that," said MacPherson. "Will they tell us the truth, sir?" Bob shrugged. He honestly didn't know.

"Did you notice or did anyone report any strange cars in the parking lot, anyone who isn't staying in the lodge hanging around?" asked Tom.

"No," said Thiessen. He looked at his wife. "Anna?"

"No, I saw no strangers and no one else did so far as I know," she said.

"Do you have any night security, Herr Thiessen?" asked Campbell. "Any alarm systems that would go off if an intruder broke in or forced a door?"

"Vy vould ve need such a thing?" the German asked with a shrug. "Zis is de Northwest Republic."

"Times like these, I wish we weren't such a free country and we had spy cameras all over the place like the Americans do," sighed MacPherson.

"I understand that dere were such things here before de Revolution, but when de state took over zis place, dey pulled all of de alarms and de cameras out," said Thiessen. "With no niggers or Mexicans, dere vas

no need. Colonel, do you believe this woman was killed by someone staying here in de hotel?"

Campbell answered carefully. "We believe we know in a general way who killed Miss Sutcliffe, a person we only know by a nickname, and we have no idea who that person is, or why they murdered her. It is of course possible that the killer came in from the outside."

"But not likely?" asked Thiessen.

"I just don't know," said Campbell frankly. "We need some solid evidence one way or the other."

Thiessen sighed, went to a drawer, and pulled out two small but heavy-caliber automatic pistols in clip-on holsters. He stuck one on his belt and handed the other to his wife. "I understand dat of course you haven't ruled out Anna and myself as suspects, Colonel, so you cannot officially involve us in de investigation, although ve certainly vould have no motive to murder a complete stranger ve met only yesterday. But if dere is a murderer living in my hotel, zis fact displeases me very much. My vife and I must safeguard our guests and ourselves, so ve vill keep a sharp eye out and tell you immediately if anything appears in any vay suspicious or unusual."

"Thank you, Herr Thiessen," said Campbell. After they left the office, he said, "Mac, you and Botha go give Bella Sutcliffe's room a full going over from top to bottom. You're looking for anything indicating she had contact with anyone local or anyone in the whole Republic for that matter. Let me know what Tech comes up with from her phone. Once you finish there, get back on with the canvas. Staff and NAR guests first, for elimination purposes. I doubt if any of them have anything to do with this. Only Doctor Wingard has any connection with Lost Creek, and I honestly think we can rule him out. Tom and I will take the foreigners and see if we can track their movements from the bar to their rooms, and see if any of them will admit to seeing anything off kilter, anyone slipping in or out of that corridor that leads to the indoor pool. In the meantime, could you ask all the EPs to gather in the lounge? I need to give them a pep talk. Jesus, in all the hurly burly I completely forgot to ask, has anyone even thought to notify Jason Stockdale as to what the hell's going on?"

"I took the liberty of doing so while I was waiting for you with the copter, sir," said Tom. "He will have informed the other EPs by now."

"Good. That means I don't have to. Also, Mac, could you find David Speidel from Northwest Power and Light and ask if he can stick around and not go out on his rounds or whatever today before we speak with him?"

"Yes, sir," said MacPherson. After he and Botha left, Horakova turned to Bob. "So what now? Do we have a word with Speidel?"

"Not quite yet. Contact your office, Tom, and I'll contact mine, and have them send anything they have on Mr. Speidel either criminal or security-wise to our phones. We're not Americans, and we don't keep files on people unless they've actually done something, so it may not be much, but this guy seems to be the only local connection to emerge so far between the victim and the Lost Creek Site and the scene of the crime, so it's the most promising lead we've got. We need to know as much as we can about him before we tackle him." Bob's phone beeped, and he answered it. "Yes? When? Beautiful. I'm looking forward to it with joyous anticipation." He hung up. "That was Jason. The rest of the EPs are on their way down here. The university arranged a copter for them and they're already in the air, so they'll be here soon. They'd been told what happened to Bella, and some of them appear to think we had something to do with it."

"Us? *Why*, for pity's sake?" demanded Tom. "What possible motive could we have to do any of them in, given the PR disaster?"

"Logic has got nothing to do with it, Tom," said Campbell morosely. "These people are convinced that we are all demons from the ninth circle of hell. They've been told that all their lives. They'll probably pack their gear and run," said Tom morosely. "Maybe that's the object of the exercise, to warn the whole group off. Let's make those calls about Speidel and go talk to the others. Maybe we can persuade them to stay and complete their job, although God knows what they'll say about us when they get home, never mind how this will affect their whole report on Lost Creek. The excavation will probably get lost in all the hysterical screaming."

"I think that may be what our buddy boy from Out There has in mind," suggested Tom.

On their way to the lounge they were waylaid in the lobby by Dr. Arne Wingard. He looked stricken. "Colonel, what the hell is happening? Who did this? Who murdered Doctor Wyrick's assistant?"

Campbell sighed. "We think it is a foreign intelligence operative, most likely from the Office of Northwest Recovery, who has orders to screw up the visit of the Eminent Persons Delegation and discredit the Lost Creek site and its findings in the eyes of the world."

"How do you know that?" demanded Wingard.

"All right, I suppose at this point you need to know," said Tom Horakova with a sigh. "Recently the Bureau of State Security was made aware that virtually every bit of information about Lost Creek, including a complete list of all the artifacts you've recovered, full schematics of the dig including subsonic ground surveys, all the chemical and Carbon-14 dating results, a complete list of everyone working on the dig, photos, the whole nine yards, have been transmitted to the Office of Northwest Recovery in the past few weeks. There is apparently an enemy agent using the code name Scorpius who is very, very close to this project."

"Mother of God!" gasped Wingard. "Who do you suspect?"

"No one, so far," said Campbell. "We haven't got a line on him or her yet, although I promise you, sir, we will."

"What can I do?" Wingard asked in a dazed voice.

"Keep Lost Creek going and prove to the world that the white man was here on this continent first, in spite of all their murder and treachery," said Campbell.

"Done!" said the archaeologist without hesitation.

"In the meantime I will be posting Guardsmen all around the site, and here in the Fairmont, and everywhere else where there's any possibility this son of a bitch might strike again," said Campbell grimly.

"But why on earth would he kill Bella Sutcliffe?"

"We don't know, Doctor Wingard," said Campbell. "But by God, we're going to find out!"

Detective Botha materialized at Campbell's side. "Colonel, a helicopter has just landed outside, with the rest of the foreign delegation on board."

"Great," sighed Bob. "Show them into the lounge with the others. I suppose I might as well talk to them all at once. In the meantime, you and Sergeant MacPherson get on with it, starting with Bella Sutcliffe's room. Tear it apart. She *must* have been communicating with Scorpius, and we have to find out how!"

When the four of them walked into the small, cozy lounge bar of the Fairmont, they were met by nine pairs of eyes. The French couple were wary. The British were cold and alert, even the previously friendly Doctor Frederick Haskins. The Canadian and American faces were angry and hostile, and Doctor Amanda Wyrick had been weeping.

There was something else, an undercurrent of fear. Bob Campbell understood that he now faced not just a homicide investigation; he had run up against more than a century of history. In these nine people, he faced generation after generation of carefully inculcated hate propaganda, racial stereotyping, social engineering and the officially sanctioned, collective vilification of any white person, especially any white male, who dared to disagree with the blind dogma of the Western world's religion of secular humanism, of liberalism and multiculturalism. His enemy now was not a single killer, but the deranged moral absolutes no longer even of equality, but of inherent and irredeemable white male evil. These visitors themselves were white, and yet through some dark alchemy, political correctness had separated them from their genes and their heritage and any awareness of their identity. He suddenly understood that to these people, the black and brown things that swarmed their own lands were at least on some level "us," while the white people of the Northwest, their very brothers and sisters in blood, were the Other. For them, quite literally, white was black and black was white, This was how the Third Reich, South Africa, Rhodesia, and the American South had perished; their white peoples had been turned into the Other in the eyes of the rest of their race. Not for the first time, Bob marveled in his mind at what the Jew had accomplished.

These people had been warned that they were coming to a land of savages, of sick and homicidal bigots and brutes, and now the bloody proof was before them in the form of Bella Sutcliffe's murdered body lying out beside the pool. Campbell knew he didn't just have to find a killer. He had to save Lost Creek.

He opened his mouth to speak, but before he did Amanda Wyrick leaped to her feet and shouted, *"Did you do this? Did you people kill her? Why?"*

Bob Campbell fought back the urge to argue, to expostulate, to try and reason with the woman. He knew from his own knowledge, from the memory of his own few horrible months Out There, that this was something beyond reason. For once, the truth was something that had to be *felt* and not thought. He hoped he could make them all feel it. "No, ma'am," he told her simply. "We did not." He looked at them all. "I won't try to convince you. If all of you truly do believe in the privacy of your own thoughts that we are some kind of devils in human form, then I can't convince you otherwise. I told you before that you are all free to go anywhere you want while you're in this country, and that includes being free to leave it. If you genuinely believe that for some bizarre and inexplicable reason we decided to murder one of your group and throw her into a swimming pool, then of course I don't expect you to stay with homicidal hosts. By all means, pack your things and leave. Chancellor Stockdale will arrange for your passage back to your own countries, and there will be no delays or any attempt to prevent you.

"But I hope you won't do that," Bob went on. "We believe that Bella Sutcliffe was murdered in order to throw sand and cast a cloud over the entire Lost Creek project and distract the attention of the world from the meaning of what is being discovered there. I regret to say that the killer may have achieved his object in doing so. There's nothing like the murder of an attractive young woman to upstage a scientific discovery, no matter how earth-shaking, especially in societies which long ago decided to substitute scandal, sensation and voyeurism for news and serious thought. I am asking you not to let this murderer win. I am asking you to stay and continue observing the work at Lost Creek, and when you get home to write a fair and objective critique of what you see here, because I'm convinced that is why Bella Sutcliffe died, to make sure you *don't* do that."

"How do we know the rest of us will be safe?" demanded Letitia Haines.

"You don't," said Campbell. "If you choose to stay, you will have a choice. You can accept protection from the Civil Guard—the regular

police, not BOSS, and yes, we carry weapons when need be and I assure you, we know how to use them. Or if you're more distrustful and afraid of us than the real killer, you can choose not to have such protection. I told you before, we believe in freedom and individual responsibility here. But if you want our help, it's yours. That's what this Republic is here for, in everything."

Detective Botha entered the room and whispered into Bob's ear. Campbell spoke up. "Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to ask all of you to step outside, back out to the helicopter pad, please," he told them. "We're evacuating the lodge."

"Why?" demanded Amanda Wyrick.

"We've just found something concealed in Bella Sutcliffe's room. It appears to be a bomb."

* * *

The Northwest Civil Guard had always maintained a notably expert and efficient bomb squad. There were several reasons for this, starting with the fact that back when the Guard was first organized in the months after Longview, its personnel comprised both bomb disposal officers from the old régime's multiple police forces who had disarmed and dismantled NVA explosive devices, and some of the same men who had made and planted those devices. There had been numerous calls on the Squad's expertise down through the intervening years. During the Seven Weeks' War, when the Guard had been subsumed into the NDF for the duration, their EOD people had disarmed and neutralized everything from artillery and mortar shells on up to unexploded Cruise missile and Predator drone warheads, and sometimes still did so when these were found buried in the dirt in out-of-the-way places or the wreckage of aircraft brought down by Bluelights.

Periodically the Office of Northwest Recovery and various small factions and cells, some of them minuscule gangs of Christian Zionist lunatics, some of them fronts financed and operated by NGOs with credible deniability like the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai Brith, would conduct bombing campaigns within the Northwest Republic. The purpose of these murder sprees

was not so much to overthrow the government and force reunification with the United States, as it was to maintain a propaganda illusion in the U.S. and East Canada that there was some kind of indigenous pro-American or pro-Ottawa resistance movement within the NAR, and to use that illusory notion as a fund-raising device. Just as the old FBI and BATFE had regularly fabricated legal cases against so-called white supremacists any time there was a threat of a budget cut to the Spokane or Seattle office, as in the infamous Edgar Steele case, so these old-line liberal and Jewish outfits fabricated secret cells of loyal red-white-and-blue freedom fighters who of course needed immense amounts of funding to continue their heroic resistance against the evil, hatemongering "racist entity."

Given the blind hatred which the Jewish and liberal world felt for the NAR, it worked fairly well: the Southern Poverty Law Center's cash reserve, long fabled in song and story, now stood at an estimated half-billion dollars. Its white and Jewish directors and staff lived in their own posh suburb of Montgomery, Alabama called Deestown, a self-contained and heavily fortified enclave with its own power plant, food production, educational system and paramilitary police force to protect the apostles of tolerance and diversity from all that bloody diversity seething and raging just beyond the barbed wire and corrugated steel barricades.

The result was that every few years a few bombs went off, a few NAR citizens were killed and maimed, a few of the paid assassins were caught before they could escape the country and swung on the gallows on the six o'clock news, and the WPB planted a few retaliatory bombs in appropriate spots around the U.S., not forgetting to pay a visit to Deestown, of course. After a few such incidents re-introduced the guilty parties to the fascinating concepts of personal responsibility for one's actions and what goes around comes around, what was left of the American authorities would rein in the ONR or the NGOs and get them to cool it for a few years. This meant that Guard Lieutenant Rod Whistler had hands-on experience in virtually every type of explosive and detonation system in current use, but this time he was stumped. "I don't know *what* the hell it is," he admitted to Bob Campbell, roughly

an hour after the Fairmont Lodge had been evacuated. "I'm not even sure it's a bomb. It might be some kind of EMP device."

"Electromagnetic pulse?" asked Campbell. "They want to disrupt our computers and electronics?"

"Could be, sir," said Whistler. "I've never seen a bomb that actually has to be plugged in to detonate. Not even a dry cell battery in there."

They were examining the device on a computer monitor. An open aluminum briefcase containing the object now lay on a heavy industrial plastic base plate inside an armored detonation trailer, parked several hundred yards from the hotel. The trailer had strong and heavy walls in addition to the base plate, but the roof was mere canvas; the force of any exploding device would not be compressed, but directed upward into the air. Whistler had considered moving the thing out of the hotel in a mobile wheeled bin also designed to direct any blast upward, but since the stairs were too bumpy and he wasn't sure whether it had a motion sensor that might trigger it in the event of a slight jarring of the elevator, he had attired himself in Bakelite and fiberglass body armor, including a camera-equipped helmet. After shooing everybody out of the hotel, he calmly closed the briefcase and slowly, carefully carried it out of Bella Sutcliffe's room, down the hall, down the stairs, and out of the building. He then carefully opened the briefcase again, locked it inside the trailer with the monitoring camera, and now he was trying to puzzle out what he was dealing with.

The device that lay inside the briefcase looked strange, like some kind of machine from a 1950s science fiction movie. It consisted of four fat-looking smoked-green glass tubes approximately fourteen inches long and three inches in diameter, with odd nipple-like projections on both ends. A third nipple or globe of glass protruded from the center top of each tube. The tubes were attached together in a single row with aluminum brackets, nuts and bolts, and the entire set bolted to a square aluminum frame. Mounted on the front of the frame was a standard NAR 220-volt socket box, facing outward as the briefcase opened, and from the open back four short blue wires connected each to the front end of the four tubes. To the right of the socket was a smaller black plastic box with a digital readout window. "Okay, even I can figure this

out. Obviously you're supposed to plug it in, either to a house current or a UPS, a battery," said Campbell, pointing to the socket.

"Yes, sir, and I'd be willing to bet that's a timer," said Whistler. "Once it's plugged into a UPS or just with an extension cord, you set the timer for X number of minutes or however long you want, and when the clock runs out it turns the socket on and those tubes get electricity. When the circuit is connected the juice goes in the tubes, and something is supposed to happen. Probably something nasty, but what?"

"So there must be some kind of detonator in the tubes," said Tom Horakova.

"Not necessarily, Captain," said Whistler. "It could be some kind of gas or compound that would ignite without a detonator, natural gas or a hydrogen-oxygen mix, or maybe simple black powder or guncotton, but if so you wouldn't get much of a blast from anything this small. Whatever kind of charge it is, it must be pretty potent. Ordinary powder would just make this a big firecracker. Plastique or Semtex would require a detonator cap, yes, but if that's what this is, it's a damned funny way to wire it. I don't see anything that looks like a standard cap. I loosened the connectors a bit when I was looking it over upstairs, although I didn't try to actually pull one out. All I saw was what looked like a small flat silver ribbon or filament going into the tube. As near as I can see it's not even a complete circuit."

"Why glass?" asked Tom. "Why not iron or steel pipe for better shrapnel?"

"No idea, sir. Let's run a diagnostic." Whistler tapped on the laptop and the sensors inside the van began to whirr, although they could not be heard a hundred feet away. "Hmm! What the hell . . . ?"

"What is it?" asked Campbell.

"No chemtraces of any known explosive, Colonel, and the microwave density probe indicates that the tubes are empty."

"Huh?" asked Horakova. "So the bomb isn't fully loaded yet?"

"Uh, no sir, as I read this, they're *really* empty. Those thingummies are plain old-fashioned vacuum tubes! Big ones."

"Like the first radios used?" asked Campbell.

"Yes, sir," said Whistler with a nod.

"Okay. Uh—why?"

"Let me think. Something about this looks familiar—I seem to remember something from high school science class back in Calgary—well, I'll be damned! I know! Those are Röntgen tubes! I'll bet that filament I saw really was silver!"

"Sorry, Lieutenant, you've lost me," said Campbell, shaking his head.

"The first X-ray devices, from 1895 if I remember correctly," explained Whistler. "Basically, when you shoot electricity through a vacuum tube, you get cathode rays, and at certain frequencies or wavelengths you get the kind of electromagnetic radiation known as X-rays." He tapped some keys on his laptop and studied a series of digital readings. "Yep. Those tubes are radioactive. Eighty cpm, not dangerously high above normal background for this area, but enough for me to know somebody's revved that thing up recently. Which in a sense is almost as dangerous as if it *was* a bomb, although not as destructive."

"In what way?" asked Campbell keenly.

"There's no shielding and no directional focus on that damned thing, sir," said Whistler "It's not an actual X-ray machine, it's just a device for generating X-rays, if you get the difference. It's medically useless. As near as I can see, you hook it up and you start running current through it and what you get is X-rays flying every which way. Too much exposure can be fatal, not to mention causing all kinds of tissue damage and brain damage and cancer. Probably wouldn't take too long, either, depending on how many rads those museum pieces generate, which would in turn depend on the voltage and amperage of the power source, but I'd guess it's a lot of damned rads. A potentially deadly amount. It's an odd kind of destructive device for the ONR or whoever is behind this to use, but it's a killer nonetheless. It's a good way they can poison people without slipping arsenic in their beer, or whatever."

"But if there's no shielding, wouldn't the person who activated the device also be exposed?" asked Horakova.

"Yes, but I suppose that like most bombers, he or she doesn't plan on being around for that part," said Whistler with a grim smile.

"Damn!" muttered Campbell. "That bitch! What the hell was she planning on doing with this bloody thing? Probably setting it off where Ally and Bobby would get caught in it. If I'd known I would have strangled her myself! Lieutenant, you say this infernal thing has been used or fired recently?"

"The Röntgen tubes are emitting a low level of X-radiation, yes sir, so I'd say somebody fired it up in the last 24 hours. It's not dangerous now, but it would have been when that occurred."

"Dear God, she might have been running it last night and blasting X-rays throughout the entire hotel!" hissed Tom Horakova. "Maybe she left the bar at eleven, went up to her room and plugged this bastard in, then left her room to try and clear out of the building . . ."

"Then she went down to the indoor pool where she met somebody who strangled her and dumped her in the drink?" queried Campbell. "Like Sherlock Holmes said, it is a capital error to theorize without data. Lieutenant, when you found this device, did you find a power source, an extension cord, anything that looked like it might have been used to plug this thing in?"

"No, sir," Whistler told him. "Nor was the timer set. You see it there just as we found it." He gestured to his computer screen. "I understand that Detective Botha actually discovered the device, inside one of the decedent's larger suitcases. He also pointed out to me some clothing of hers that was piled on the floor of her closet, almost like it had been removed from the suitcase to make room for the aluminum briefcase."

"So she didn't bring the briefcase in with her, which we seem to have confirmed since nobody remembers seeing it," said Horakova. "As it happens both Doctor Wingard and David Speidel have similar briefcases they use for carrying work material, but both of theirs are accounted for. MacPherson checked. Could someone have planted the X-ray bomb or whatever it is in Bella Sutcliffe's room?"

"In which case she's not a spy, she's an innocent victim and there is most likely no connection between her and her killer. Sure, just what we need, a little extra complication to make this case more interesting!" muttered Campbell. "You have a hazmat officer on your team, Lieutenant Whistler? And a Geiger counter?"

"Yes, sir. Two, myself and Sergeant Swanepoel."

"Go over the hotel and see if the place is going to be glowing in the dark after sunset. Have your paramedic check out the guests as well," Campbell ordered. "If any of them had been exposed sometime last night, how long would it take for them to show symptoms of radiation poisoning?"

"Uh, with something as raw as an X-ray overdose, we'd know pretty quick, sir," said Whistler. "If I recall my training, there would be burns, maybe third-degree, violent nausea and vomiting, extreme pain, fever and heart arrhythmia, skin peeling off in flaps, good stuff like that, very soon after exposure. But I've never had to deal with anything like this, Colonel. You might want to call in an NDF biowar officer, and I think we need to take this contraption back down to Missoula and show it to an engineer and figure out just how it works and how much X-radiation it throws out, what its range would be and how powerful."

After Whistler went to get his sergeant and the Geiger counters, Campbell rubbed his chin meditatively. "Tom, does this make *any* kind of sense to you? What an odd weapon for the ONR to use! Why? What's it all in aid of, and how does the killing of Bella Sutcliffe figure into it?"

"I think we need to talk to two people," said Horakova. "Amanda Wyrick, because she knew Bella best, in fact the only one here who really did know her so far as we are aware, and that NP&L guy Speidel, because he seems to have appeared on the scene right when she did."

"Wyrick's out at the dig." With Campbell's permission, Dr. Arne Wingard had taken the rest of the Eminent Persons on out to the Lost Creek site. Normally one wouldn't disperse witnesses on a homicide case like that, but Campbell didn't want them sitting around brooding and getting paranoid; the devil made work for idle hands. He decided that the best way to make them temporarily forget the loss of a colleague and get them sufficiently interested to stick around and not embarrass the Republic by fleeing while screaming bloody murder, was to get them out on the site and thinking about old bones. "Let's have a word with Speidel. Where is he?"

"Mrs. Thiessen is serving a kind of brunch out by the outdoor pool," said Horakova. "Making a virtue of a necessity until we tell them it's all right to go back inside. I don't think the other guests have anything to do with this, sir. They're all regulars and they've been here before all this Lost Creek business came up. The Thiessens know them."

"Okay, cut them loose, except for Speidel." Horakova's phone buzzed and he answered it.

"Horakova. Yes, Cathy? He does? Aha! Hang on." He looked up at Campbell. "Speidel has a political file."

"He does, does he? Get the skinny on it and catch up with me."

Campbell went up to the remaining guests who were clustered around the pool, some of them sipping coffee or sitting at the white wrought-iron tables munching a late breakfast. "Comrades and citizens, thank you very much for your patience," he said to the group. "I gather you've already given your statements to Sergeant MacPherson or Detective Botha. If that's the case, then we need detain you no longer. I know you have things you need to be doing. Mr. Speidel, could you stay for a bit?" Speidel stayed. He seemed somewhat edgy as Campbell sat down at the white wrought-iron table by the pool. "Mind if I grab some of that coffee?" he asked.

"Be my guest. Mrs. T. makes a great pot. Why me?"

"You understand, you were speaking to the dead woman yesterday out at Lost Creek, and apparently also in the bar last night, so I need to go into things a little more in depth in your case," said Campbell reassuringly.

"Sure, Colonel," said Speidel. "I don't know what I can tell you, though. I never met the woman before yesterday, out at Lost Creek. She just walked up and started a conversation about Tesla energy."

"Anything else?"

"She wanted to know what I did, how life was in the Republic for the average guy, that kind of thing," said Speidel. "Just conversational."

"How personal did the conversation get?" asked Campbell.

"You mean did she, uh . . ."

"Was she trying to ring your chimes?" asked Campbell bluntly.

"Huh?" asked Speidel in confusion. "I never even saw her before yesterday. But yeah, she was friendly, kind of—well, these American

women, they're all . . . you know what I mean. I heard you've been Out There."

"Oh? Where did you hear that?" asked Campbell, his eyebrows arching.

"Come on, Colonel. Everybody remembers what you did during the war, you and that brave lady comrade."

"There were many others equally brave involved, but yes, I see what you meant," said Bob with a sigh. "My fault. Sometimes I forget I was famous once."

"How can you forget being a national hero?" asked Speidel curiously.

"Oh, it can be done, with practice and effort," said Bob. "Anyway, Bella Sutcliffe was flirting with you out at the site? And later on in the hotel bar, possibly trying to lure you up to her room?"

"Well, yeah, maybe." Speidel was truly sweating now. "Look, Colonel, I kidded around with her, but I never would have done anything like that, I swear. My wife would kill me!"

"And you told her that?" Bob asked.

"Uh, yeah. She thought it was funny, believe it or not."

"Yes, I think she would have," replied Campbell with a sigh. "If Americans aren't screaming that we're evil incarnate, they think we're quaint. I don't know which is worse. Mr. Thiessen says you were the next person to leave the hotel bar after Miss Sutcliffe. That right?"

"Yeah, I left at maybe ten after eleven."

"You didn't see her again in the hallway? You didn't go down the corridor by the desk that leads to the indoor pool?"

"No, absolutely not!" said Speidel firmly. "I had to get to bed. I got up early this morning and I was about to hit the road but then those kids found the body. I really need to be in Free Helena right now checking out the main transmitter. Are we done yet? I really need to get going."

Bob glanced over and he saw Tom Horakova beckoning him. "Excuse me a moment." He walked around the pool. "Yes?"

Tom grinned at him. "Question. You go to a lot of Old NVA shindigs with Jason, right?"

"Uh, yeah," said Bob. "Why?"

"Ever run across Commandant Billy Basquine from the Corvallis Flying Column at any of them?"

"A couple of times. He was a lean, mean bastard and he deserved every bit of his rep. Why do you ask?"

"You remember about four years after Longview, when the government finally figured things had settled down enough to where we could start passing out the medals and commendations? When the Old NVA Association was formed, for those who were Volunteers during the guerrilla war, before the changeover when the NVA became the NDF?"

"Yes, at the end of the July Days, if memory serves. I was fourteen and Missoula was still occupied then. No, I tell a lie, I was still thirteen. And this has what to do with our case, exactly?" asked Campbell.

"It's relevant, maybe. That's when yon laddie Dave had his little contretemps that earned him a file," explained Horakova. "A thin one, admittedly."

"Twenty-eight years ago?"

"Yeah. This happened in Bend, Oregon. There was a desk at the local Party office where former Volunteers could come in and fill out the form for their veterans' benefits and all the little extras NVA vets get, plus the right to wear the decoration and the roundel on their civvies. Actually it was just a table in the lobby in this case. One day Billy Basquine was in the office, and the guy on regular duty goes on his lunch break, so the Commandant himself sits in for him."

"Yeah, I recall Jason telling me that was Billy B, no job too big or small, during the war or after," replied Campbell with a nod.

"Anyway, in comes young Speidel, and he fills out the form for NVA benefits and the medal and hands it to Basquine, whom he apparently doesn't know by sight, which was odd right off the bat. Then Basquine sees the form isn't filled out all the way." Horakova began to chuckle. "So Basquine asks Speidel what company he was in, who was his company commander, who was his brigade commander, who were the required two other Volunteers who would vouch for him? So forth and so on. Speidel says 'I wasn't with an actual NVA unit. I was on special duty.' 'What kind of special duty?' Basquine asks him. In response, Speidel pulls a sheaf of papers out of a shopping bag and plunks

it down. Old computer screen shots of a blog. Okay, long story short, Speidel wasn't even in the Homeland during the war, never mind being a Volunteer. He was a *blogger* who spent the entire War of Independence sitting in his mother's basement in Florida, writing under an anonymous name through proxy servers on a site hosted in Kazakhstan. To add insult to injury, the stuff he wrote was so damned mild that he never even got an FBI visit!"

"That's mild," agreed Campbell with a bemused grin.

"Then when the shooting's all done and the blood spilled, he comes slithering Home and demands full NVA bennies for his so-called service."

"I assume Commandant Basquine was duly impressed?" queried Bob.

"When he finally realized what the story was, Basquine jumped up and beat the living crap out of Speidel, then arrested him and dragged him down to the Guard station and turned him in as a counterrevolutionary. Which he wasn't, he was just being an asshole."

"Yeah, even in the Northwest Republic, being an asshole isn't against the law, although it's not a good idea in a society long on guns and individual responsibility," commented Campbell.

"Anyway, the Guard let him go," Horakova went on, "But BOSS ended up filing a report and making a file on him in case he showed up again in a different and more sinister context. Lying about an NVA past was considered a sign of potential trouble, and of course people who think their alleged service as a combat blogger during the Struggle wasn't sufficiently rewarded can start bearing a grudge against the Party that gets them into trouble. In those early days we kept track of a lot of people with grudges, mostly people who had lost relatives on the Union side during the war and might be looking for revenge. You think that might be the case here?" Horakova asked, nodding in Speidel's direction. "He's born a grudge all these years because we wouldn't give the Button to a keyboard commando?"

"Mmmm, maybe," said Campbell. "How about his Luftwaffe service during the Seven Weeks? Was he lying about that?"

"No, Cathy checked with the Air Command personnel center. That's straight up," Horakova told him.

"Okay, well, he's kept his nose clean for twenty-eight years, so we won't brace him with it now. Being a jackass a quarter of a century ago doesn't necessarily translate into strangling a woman last night."

"He does have the technical skills to make something like that devilish X-ray bomb," pointed out Horakova.

"True, but how does that play out? He gives it to Bella Sutcliffe or she steals it from him and so he strangles her and then doesn't retrieve his infernal machine? I'm not saying forget him, I'm just saying something weird is going on here, so let's try to figure out how deep it is before we dive in. We'll keep all this in mind if his name keeps popping up. Come on." The two of them walked back over to where Speidel sat at the table. "Mr. Speidel, thank you very much for your co-operation. I think you can get on up to Helena how."

"Thanks, Colonel," said Speidel, getting up, obviously relieved. "I wish I could be more help. She was a nice lady, even if she was a bit loud."

"You're sure you can't think of anything else, anything she said or did that might be significant?" pressed Jason.

"Yesterday she asked me if I could get her a plug-in Tesla UPS receptor for her laptop, so she could use it in the field," said Speidel. "She said she was having trouble with the battery or something. I said she could buy one in any hardware store, but she could also buy a perfectly good battery for any American make of PC in that same hardware store."

After Speidel left, Horakova looked at Campbell. "She wanted a plug-in remote receptor, the kind we use to power small appliances in the field off the Tesla band. You want to bet her personal computer is in perfect order?"

"Now we know how she was going to power up the X-ray bomb," said Campbell grimly. "She was going to use a five-credit UPS receptor from Northwestern Auto."

"So if she got the device from Scorpius, to use however the hell she was going to use it, why didn't *he* just spend the five C's and give her the power source himself along with the machine?" asked Horakova. "It can't work without juice."

"There was a source somewhere," said Campbell. "Remember, Whistler from the bomb squad said there was enough residual radiation to indicate it had been fired up within the past day. So what happened to that power source?"

"She stole it from Scorpius, but she forgot to get the UPS with it?" wondered Horakova. "Scorpius stole it back from her?"

"Still not enough data to speculate," decided Campbell. "Let's go and see the Wyrick woman at the site. Maybe they've uncovered a Cro-Magnon Jacuzzi."

XXVIII

The Scorpion's Sting

(32 years, seven months, and nine days after Longview)

All war is based on deception.
—Sun Tzu

By the time Robert Campbell and Tom Horakova arrived out at the Lost Creek dig site, university Chancellor Jason Stockdale was already there, and they brought him up to speed in the Shack. Jason's face was grim. "Okay, granted I'm not that much of a science nerd myself, but I think I can hazard a guess as to what kind of nefarious use the X-ray machine might have been intended for. I want to confirm it with an expert, though," he said. He picked up his phone and hit a speed-dial. "Ally, could you ask Doctor Wyrick and Doctor Haskins to step up here, please? Thanks." He hung up the phone. "That's a strange device for anyone in this century to know how to put together, though. Let me ask you something. Could you tell if it was made here in the Republic?"

"Pretty sure," said Campbell. "It would have been hard for Customs to miss any of these folks bringing in something like that at the airport, and as a clincher the input socket is one of our three-pronged 220-volt kind."

"Maybe that's why Bella was asking Speidel about where she could buy a local power receptor," suggested Tom.

"Yeah, I remember when we switched over," chuckled Jason. "Quite a boost for our own home-grown electronics industry here in the NAR, making sure American appliances can't run here without an adapter. Better than a protective tariff. Surely you can track down

who purchased the components? I mean, who the hell makes vacuum tubes any more?"

"We can try, although somebody who was really mechanically inclined could probably find a way to make them from scratch," said Campbell. "It's not as if we're anal records-keepers like the Americans, where any time anybody buys a pack of clothes pins it goes onto a computer database somewhere. We're free in every sense of the word here; we don't monitor our people's lives and activities on a minute-by-minute basis."

"No suspects at all?" asked Jason.

"This guy Speidel from NP&L is a definite maybe, but we don't have any evidence against him other than the fact that he talked to the dead woman out here and last night in the Fairmont bar," said Tom Horakova. "He said she initiated the contact, and we can't prove otherwise."

"I had MacPherson and Botha give his room an extra-meticulous toss while they were all out by the pool," said Campbell. "Nothing unusual. A minor political beef twenty-eight years ago isn't much to hang an espionage charge on without some kind of indication he's held a grudge against the Party for not acknowledging his heroic contribution to the Revolution. It would help if we find he's done something suspicious a bit more recently, but so far we're coming up dry."

"I told my people back at the office to start digging into his past," said Horakova. "But to tell the truth, he doesn't strike me as the type. His one run-in with state security was a generation ago, and there's been no indication of a bad attitude since then. Plus even then it had to do with him being a wannabe, not a doer. If Speidel was some kind of long-term sleeper he wouldn't have made that mistake and brought attention on himself back then. He would have done everything he could to blend in. Sure, maybe he might have brooded on his imagined wrongs and worked up a sense of grievance against the Party and the Republic, and somehow gotten in touch with the ONR since then. It's been known to happen. But I think in Speidel's case, if he had it in him to be a for-real player on either side, he wouldn't have tried to claim a false prestige and heroism that wasn't his. Just a feeling."

"And why would he kill the Sutcliffe woman right in the same hotel where he was staying, knowing he'd be pointing a finger right at himself?" asked Stockdale, ruminating. "Why not wait until he could at least try and arrange some kind of alibi?"

"It might have been some kind of spur-of-the-moment thing that couldn't wait," suggested Campbell. "Like a float, back in the old days?"

"I don't care what you see on TV, floats weren't spur-of-the-moment impulse killings," said Jason. "Not usually, anyway. They were planned expeditions by an NVA team into an area likely to be target-rich, in order to seek out and terminate targets of opportunity and keep the enemy off-balance, because they never could surround everybody and everything with bodyguards and Bremer walls. The classic example would be the sniper teams who went out hunting and probably did more to drive the Americans batshit and clear the Northwest of shitskins and other undesirables than almost anything else we did. Once niggers and Mexicans understood they couldn't step outside their doors without risking a bullet in their heads, California or Baltimore suddenly started looking a whole lot more attractive. But the Volunteers carefully scouted each shot, always with a spotter and usually a driver as well, always with an eye on escape routes and contingency plans. A good floater team never pulled a trigger or tossed a cocktail until they knew exactly how they were going to un-ass the area and what they would do if anything went wrong. The bad ones didn't come back. What I'm saying is that if this Scorpius is an actual ONR-trained operative, I doubt he'd lose his head and impulsively strangle one of his assets, then leave a crucial piece of equipment in her room for us to find."

"Two ONR spies falling out? Over what?" asked Horakova. "And why didn't he remove the X-ray device from her room? The body wasn't found for hours, so he had plenty of time, and surely a spy knows how to pick a lock on a hotel room door? You're having her room dusted for prints, aren't you?"

"Mac is," said Campbell. "It's part of the routine. As to your question, I can think of a couple of reasons why he didn't remove the infernal machine. First, maybe he didn't know she had it. Second, maybe he didn't *want* to remove it. Maybe he planted it there in the first place.

She didn't bring it into the lodge in her suitcase, because someone took her clothes out and tossed them on the closet floor, so whoever placed the metal briefcase inside the suitcase, it was done sometime last night after she checked in."

"Why would the killer put that weird thing into a place where he knew we'd find it right away?" asked Horakova.

"Maybe because it *is* a weird thing," replied Campbell moodily. "Maybe this whole business is nothing but an elaborate diversion to get us off chasing our tails looking for who bought or made the components for this archaic machine, while Scorpius gets on with whatever he's really planning."

"What about the murder?" asked Tom.

"Nothing lends credibility to a red herring like a dead herring," replied Robert Campbell grimly.

"You mean this character may have killed her just for window dressing?" asked Tom in disgust.

"Sounds like an American to me," said Jason with a nod. There was a knock on the Shack door, which he opened. "Doctor Wyrick, Doctor Haskins, thanks for taking the time. Please come in."

"Have you found out who killed Bella?" asked Amanda Wyrick anxiously.

"We will," promised Campbell.

"Right now I have a question for you," said Stockdale. "Both of you are familiar with radiocarbon dating. I need to ask you, what effect would prolonged exposure to X-rays have on the kind of artifacts we've been finding out here, as far as their accurate carbon-dating goes?"

"I beg your pardon?" asked Haskins, puzzled.

"What are you talking about? Does this have something to do with Bella's murder?" asked Amanda Wyrick.

"I'm afraid so," said Campbell. "I'll explain in a bit, but it suddenly hit me what you're talking about, Jason, and I think you may be on to something. Could you describe to me what would happen if the artifacts you've seen here so far and possibly even the whole site itself were exposed to large amounts of X radiation?"

"Uh, how powerful, and for how long?" asked Haskins.

"I'm not sure, exactly, but we're talking a lengthy dose produced by four large Röntgen tubes operating off a 220-volt current."

"Uh, well, it's a radiometric dating method that uses the radioisotope carbon-14 to estimate the age of carbon-bearing materials up to sixty thousand years," the Englishman replied. "Beyond that age it gets a bit dodgey, because it's based on the carbon isotope's half-life, that is to say its natural rate of decay. It works best on organic material, obviously, such as bone and wood and coprolite, but it can also work on most crude metals because they have carbon content from primitive smelting techniques used in the Bronze Age or medieval times, and also from all kinds of carbon-bearing particulates that have bonded or adhered to the metal down though the millennia. No good on stone, though; we have to determine the age of stone artifacts from the age of the surrounding earth strata and the other artifacts we find in the vicinity. Circumstantial evidence, so to speak, which has always been a problem with the Solutrean hypothesis, because most rocks are by definition untold millions of years old, unless they are newly formed from volcanic magma, of course. Sorry, I'm babbling like an egghead. Dragging myself kicking and screaming back to your question, Chancellor, as to X-rays, in any carbon-dating attempt they would bugger up the whole process."

"That's what I thought," said Jason with a nod.

"Could you explain that on a ten year-old level, for the benefit of Captain Horakova and myself?" asked Campbell.

"Right," Haskins said. "Let's see—the element carbon has two stable isotopes, Carbon-12 and Carbon-13, and one unstable one, Carbon-14, which has a half-life of five thousand, seven hundred and thirty years, meaning that if you start with an ounce of Carbon-14 today, you will have half an ounce fifty-seven centuries and three decades from now. By unstable isotope I mean Carbon-14 leaks sub-atomic particles. In other words, it's radioactive, although not at a level dangerous to life like, say, uranium or plutonium. The steady state radioactivity concentration of exchangeable carbon-14 is generally reckoned at 14 dpm, disintegrations per minute per gram."

"Maybe you should have asked for a five-year-old level, sir," said Tom.

"We can date anything organic by measuring how long the carbon in it has been rotting. How's that?" asked Haskins.

"Thank you, Doctor," said Campbell.

"I repeat, Carbon-14 half-life decay is in fact a kind of radiation, although occurring at such low rates and at such a low energy level that, although it goes on all around us, it is not harmful and is in fact responsible for some of the normal low-level background radiation which exists everywhere on earth. This Carbon-14 decay radiation consists of electrons and electron anti-neutrinos, which barely penetrate the layer of dead skin cells on our bodies and do no harm. X-rays, on the other hand, are electromagnetic waves like radio waves or visible light, except at extremely high frequencies and short wavelengths. X-rays are generated when fast-moving electrons strike a metallic surface in a vacuum. Unlike Carbon-14 decay radiation, X radiation is very penetrating and can be dangerous because each X-ray photon has enough energy to break ionic chemical bonds. When this happens inside the human body, DNA molecules are broken or modified, and other serious damage is done to living cells. Hence we get effects like radiation burns, radiation sickness, and genetic mutations, and all that lovely kind of thing. Fortunately, elements of high atomic and therefore molecular density, such as lead, can be used to shield people from X-rays and gamma rays. Of course, none of this is really my field," Haskins concluded modestly.

"Of course," agreed Campbell, his mind numbed.

"Can you give me some idea of what this is about?"

"We found a machine in Bella Sutcliffe's room that seems to have been put together in somebody's garage," Campbell told them. "It was in a standard-sized metal briefcase for tools and samples and electronic gear, of the type a number of your people brought with you, and which to be fair a number of people here in the Republic also carry. The briefcase contained four apparently home-made vacuum tubes, actually Röntgen tubes. They were completely unfocused and unshielded with lead or anything else, and if anyone had hooked the thing up to a socket or a Tesla UPS receptor, it would have sat there glowing and spewing X-rays all over everywhere."

"Good God, that would be incredibly dangerous!" gasped Haskins. "Your average medical X-ray exposure in a hospital or dentist's office is only a microsecond, and even then technicians have to wear lead aprons and other protective gear to guard themselves from cumulative exposure. A few minutes of unshielded exposure at the level you're talking about would kill people!"

"At first we thought that was the idea," said Campbell. "But now I'm not so sure. Maybe human beings were not the intended primary targets. Suppose someone could have irradiated some or all of the Lost Creek artifacts, either here or at the UM lab, with even a few minutes of raw X radiation?"

"Accurate carbon-dating would be impossible," said Haskins immediately. "There would be no way to measure the Carbon-14 isotope's natural decay due to the molecular damage caused by the irradiation."

"Don't archaeologists take X-rays sometimes?" asked Tom Horakova. "I seem to remember seeing some shots taken inside King Tutankhamen's noggin and the Iceman of the Alps."

"Performed with proper medical equipment, and even then only after a full analysis of everything else has been done," said Haskins. "That's why it took about four years to discover that Őtzi the Iceman was killed by an arrow."

"You said Bella had this machine in her room?" demanded Dr. Wyrick incredulously. "That's impossible! Some of us would have noticed if she'd been lugging around a portable X-ray device between Harvard and here!"

"We think it was placed there last night, ma'am, either by Bella herself or by her killer." said Campbell. "It appears to be of local manufacture. How exactly it came to be there and for what use it was intended, we don't know."

"You think Bella was planning to sabotage the excavation by contaminating the artifacts?"

"Ma'am, I don't know," Campbell repeated gently. "I hope it turns out there's some other explanation. I know she was your friend."

"A friend of many years," said Wyrick. "She was one of my first undergraduates at Harvard, and we went on digs all over the world

together. Colonel Campbell, I know you're a policeman, and like all policemen the world over I'm sure you hear this all the time, but I simply *cannot* believe that Bella was involved in anything like you imply. She had—issues, yes. She was very careless in her personal relationships with men and she was disorderly and reckless in other ways, and she didn't approve of your Republic or of your, ah, racial beliefs, but she was genuinely devoted to the study of the past. In her work she was completely professional. She just *wouldn't* deliberately contaminate a site or its findings, not to make a political point!"

Campbell wasn't going to argue with her. "Again, ma'am, I hope you're right. We'll have to see where the evidence takes us."

There was a knock on the door, and Arne Wingard stuck his head in. "Doctor Wyrick? Doctor Haskins? We're ready to sink our first trench down to Level One. Sorry, Colonel, are you through in here?"

"Yes, I just wanted some technical information," said Campbell. "What do you mean sink a trench down to Level One, Doctor Wingard?"

"In view of what's going on, I think it's a good idea to see if we can hurry up and get to the good stuff, so to speak, as soon as we decently can," replied Wingard. "If there is any good stuff to be found, which I'm convinced there will be. Allura and I and several diggers are going to take the six center grid squares in the longhouse area down about another four feet to Level One, the earth strata we estimate at between ten and twelve thousand years old. Paleolithic, although we'll have to confirm the age of the strata by carbon-dating from soil samples, of course, which will contain animal and vegetable residue of various kinds. Orthodoxy tells us there shouldn't be anything down there except Indian bones and stone hand tools, not even any Clovis or Folsom points that far back. If there's anything else, we've hit pay dirt."

"Let's hope you can date it accurately," said Campbell with a significant look at the others.

"Sure we can. Why not?" asked Wingard. He looked at them. "Anyway, each grid block is a meter square, so we'll have a kind of trench, and then we start working from the center outward towards all four walls, so we in essence lower the floor of the longhouse in sections, and sift through every grain of dirt. We think there must have been

centuries at least of constant habitation here, on and off, as the site was occupied at different periods, but we don't know when that earliest period of habitation was. What say let's go find out?"

"Certainly, Doctor Wingard," said Haskins. They left the Shack and Wingard looked at them. "Any developments?" he asked.

"Not really, but it's early days yet," said Campbell.

"Look, I know you gentlemen don't have crystal balls, but are any of my people in danger here on this site? Is the site itself in danger?"

"There's a chance, yes," Campbell told him bluntly. "Somebody doesn't like what you're doing here and they're willing to go to any length to stop it, as we saw last night. This person or persons may be trying to frighten you into suspending the dig. You gonna get twitchy on us?"

"Not on your nelly!" said Wingard immediately. "I just wondered if I was being paranoid wearing this." He opened his khaki work jacket and displayed an automatic in a shoulder holster.

"Just because you're paranoid, that don't mean they ain't out to get you," Campbell told him.

"Paranoids have enemies too, you know," added Tom.

* * *

Bob knew full well that in MacPherson and Botha he had perfectly competent subordinates who were capable of handling a homicide investigation, and who would resent the Chief of Ds leaning over their shoulder and back-seat driving while they worked. He also understood that, although he was being exquisitely polite about it, the fact was that this was a Bureau of State Security operation and Tom was in charge of it despite his lower rank. Therefore Campbell forced himself to do both the politic and the practical thing; he left Lost Creek and the investigation into Bella Sutcliffe's murder in Tom's hands, went back to the Fairmont Lodge, returned from there to Missoula with the helicopter, and then went home for a late lunch. That afternoon he went back to his own office and dealt with other matters, sternly resisting the urge to phone Tom or DS MacPherson for an update. He knew

they would call him when they had something or needed something from him.

Tom finally called about six that evening, just as Bob was leaving for the day. "First thing, we need to use full scramble. It's possible our guy may have his own interception technology, or else he's got American satellite access. We need to try to avoid any eavesdropping."

Robert clicked a couple of buttons on his desk phone to activate the NAR's latest top-security audio ambiguation program. "Let's hope our techies are still one jump ahead of theirs," he said.

"Knock wood. Okay, there's news," Horakova told him. "Some good, some bad, some weird."

"Start with the bad news first," said Bob.

"The bad news is that we have not turned up hide nor hair of a viable suspect," said Horakova. "Not so much as a whisper of a clue. As far as Mac and Botha can tell, everybody at the Fairmont checks out. Your lads and a few of mine have discreetly turned that hotel upside down. Nobody has anything in their possession they shouldn't have, or anything that might be used as a garrote, although that could well be hidden someplace in a tool shed or a store room looking like an innocuous piece of rope or string. The man would have to be a gibbering idiot to keep it on him. Since a gun wasn't used, we've no reason to demand any of the guests give us their personal weapons for ballistics analysis, and the foreigners don't have any anyway. Other than that, everybody's clean as a whistle. No more strange home-made death rays or time machines. I had one of our tech teams flown down from Spokane. They brought along a few items we don't have in our BOSS lab here, and a special medical examiner as well."

"I'll bet Eddie Cantone was tickled pink," said Campbell.

"Actually, he was okay with it," said Horakova. "He said that way if anything was wrong with the post-mortem, his own rump was covered."

"Nobody in the regular cops likes security cases," Campbell dryly. "You trenchcoats make us nervous. License to kill and all. No offense."

"None taken," said Tom. "We're *supposed* to make people nervous. Anyway, now for the weird part. Our forensic egghead brought with him

some kind of super-duper micro-spectroscopic analysis machine and a laptop full of hotshot software that WPB stole off various American and European computers, and we were able to find a few traces of foreign DNA on Bella Sutcliffe's remains despite the dunking in chlorinated water."

"Under her fingernails?" asked Bob. "So she fought back? Good for her!"

"Nope," said Tom. "Saliva. The strangulation forced her tongue through her teeth and effectively sealed her mouth shut, keeping the pool water out."

"I don't follow," said Campbell.

"The bastard seems to have given her the kiss of death, literally. Slipped her some tongue before he slipped her the noose."

"What a prince!" snorted Bob in disgust. "But you say you were able to get readable DNA?"

"Yes," Horakova told him. "If you were worried, Arne Wingard's off the hook, and so is Speidel. We got their DNA maps from the Health Service in Missoula and up in Coeur d'Alene, where Speidel lives."

"It must be nice not to have to worry about warrants in your service," commented Campbell.

"It is. No match on any of the Eminent Persons, either, unless the ONR or one of the other foreign agencies got clever and tampered with their ringer's on-file DNA records before our Circus hackers could steal them, which I suppose is possible if you're really into Byzantine conspiracy theory."

"And this is the weird part, how?" asked Bob.

"Our killer, or at least our kisser, whom I think we can assume are one and the same, is seventy per cent Khazar Type C, which is usually Lithuanian or other Baltic Jew; fourteen percent Khazar D, which is Polish or Galician Jewish, and ten percent Caucasian as in from the Caucasus Mountains area, so this one's great-grandmother probably *was* raped by Cossacks, or at least she partied hearty with them. The remaining six per cent is bits and pieces of Eastern Europe and a touch of something they think might be Lapp."

Campbell sat there in stunned silence for a moment. "You're telling me we've not only got a spy and a killer running around my patch here in Montana, but a goddamned *Jew* as well?" he demanded.

"That's what it looks like, yes," said Tom quietly. "What can I tell you, Bob? These people are the greatest masters of deception in human history. It's what they do. Did we really think they would never deceive us again just because we won a revolution and then a war? They don't stop, you know. They'll never stop until we kill them all."

"Anything else?" asked Campbell heavily. "You said there was good news?"

"Yes, the good news is that white people were here in North America first," said Tom.

"They found something on the site?" queried Bob.

"Roughly twelve thousand years ago, whoever built the first longhouse at Lost Creek apparently raised it around a grave or a tomb," Tom told him. "Very primitive, just a narrow hole filled with stones and vegetation of some sort, possibly wildflowers, in which was laid the body of a young man of about twenty."

"Some kind of human sacrifice like those European bog burials?" asked Campbell. "I saw a TV program on them once."

"They're not sure, but it looks more like a normal burial of a respected person" said Horakova. "They're still slowly exposing the remains as we speak, and they're setting up floodlights down there to keep on working through the night. I have to admit watching them unearth that grave is sending chills up my spine. You don't often get to witness history being made."

Georgia's face flashed through Bob's mind as it still did every few days, despite the years that had gone by. "It's overrated, sometimes," he replied.

"Well, the skull is definitely modern Caucasian, not Cro-Magnon, damned sure not Indian, and they found some flint spear points and a knife blade that might have been grave goods, stuff for the departed to take with him to the afterlife, so forth and so on," Tom continued. "The blades are of the classic Solutrean shape. The Martineaus have confirmed this. They're in a state of shock. All the EPs are. This is as if we'd found Kennewick Man fully intact where he fell, and this time there are no lefty-libs or Indians or any damnable United States of America to tell us we can't learn all about him. If this find holds up

under their scrutiny, and the carbon-dating confirms the age, then this is it, Bob. Game, set, and match. We were here first."

"When Scorpius hears that, he's going to go berserk," said Campbell grimly. "You've got full security on the site?"

"Four of my men, plus I made sure Bobby and all the allegedly off-duty Guards who are helping out are strapped," confirmed Horakova.

"I think we need to ramp it up," said Campbell. "Let me send you some uniforms for visibility."

"All right, thanks," said Tom. "The way I see it, Scorpius wants to mess up of all these archaeological finds in order to discredit the site, or simply make any kind of analysis impossible. That would seem to be his line of thinking, based on that X-ray bomb, assuming he really did intend to use it and the whole thing isn't some sort of bizarre diversion. The murder looks spur-of-the-moment to me."

"So why *did* he kill her?" wondered Campbell. "There are three classic motives for homicide, the Three P's they call 'em in detective school: passion, profit, and protection. This must be a protection killing. He had to shut Bella Sutcliffe up, or get her out of the way."

"Either she was his accomplice and she got out of line somehow, or else she found out something about him that made her a danger to him," speculated Tom.

"Or he's worried we're getting close and he wanted to throw sand in our faces," Campbell reminded him.

"But we're *not* getting close," complained Horakova. "We still haven't got a clue, except we now know he's a hebe."

"Which almost certainly means he is in deep disguise and was inserted deliberately by ONR or maybe CSIS, probably some time ago," said Campbell. "Let's see if we can start working up a profile of someone close to the Lost Creek site itself or maybe just to the university who might fit. The main thing is to try and figure out where he will strike next."

"I'd rather not," said Horakova. "Too risky. He's already killed once. Is there any way we could draw him out? Bait him with some nice juicy artifacts or something of the kind, and set a trap for him?"

"Let me think about that," mused Campbell. "Let's look at this from his point of view. By killing Bella Sutcliffe, he's blown his cover, at least

to the extent that now everybody knows something's going on, and he knows we're looking for him. If he didn't already know."

"I'm sure ONR found some way of notifying him through whatever communication channel they're using that he was compromised when our guy hacked their database and discovered his existence," said Horakova.

"True. One way or the other, he knows we're on his trail and we'll be all over the whole Lost Creek project like white on rice. He has to move fast now. He has to do something that will completely ruin the whole dig."

"Another X-ray bomb?" guessed Horakova. "And where would he have planted that thing, anyway, to irradiate the maximum number of Lost Creek artifacts? It would have to be in the Shack on site, which is where they are taken before they're shipped out to the lab at UM, or in the lab itself. That's all I can figure, but he wouldn't be able to get them all at once, and he would have had to find some way to activate the Röntgen tubes when he wasn't around, unless he's suicidal. Plus, in both locations it would be pretty hard to conceal the thing without somebody noticing it; people are in and out of both places all the time. So how did that devilish machine end up in the Fairmont Lodge? Who brought the damned thing into the hotel, and why?"

Campbell stared at the wall in front of him, tapping a pencil on his desk, thinking hard. "It wouldn't be the lab," he said after a bit. "There's no point in damaging a few artifacts when they can always excavate more. He has to do something to screw up that entire archaeological site, make it useless to scholars and its secrets unobtainable. He has to take out the dig itself. How would you go about that, Tom?"

"Hmmm. Interesting point. You couldn't flood the place, since Lost Creek itself is only a trickling stream. Some kind of really massive explosion that would bury all twelve acres or so of the extended site? Probably not within his capability if he's operating alone. Be a hell of a big truck bomb. Maybe we should ask Jason for an expert opinion," Tom added with a chuckle.

"Not a bomb," said Campbell, his blood suddenly freezing in his veins. "A missile. Maybe a Predator Five mounting a tactical nuke

or a CL-20 warhead. Something that would reduce the whole site to nothing but a gigantic crater."

"Could it get by our air defense grid?" asked Horakova. "All those goop guns and static curtains, not to mention good old-fashioned Bluelights?"

"There hasn't been a serious war scare ever since the Seven Weeks ended, Tom," said Campbell. "One thing about being a nation of soldiers with a two-for-two track record against Big A itself is that nobody else has been stupid enough to try us on. No one is expecting an attack, not by one single fast missile fired without warning from a mobile launcher hidden on the back of a truck or inside a railroad freight car as near to the border as they can get it, which is what I imagine Scorpius has lined up. Two or three minutes in the air to reach Anaconda. Yeah, it might get through. And they're desperate enough to try it. You have no idea how a proven and accepted Lost Creek will morally destroy what is left of world liberalism, once it becomes an accepted historical fact that white men were here first and we seem to have a lot longer pedigree on earth than any other race."

"So when do we think this might happen?" asked Tom.

Campbell took a deep breath. "If it was me, I'd say tonight," he said. "Scorpius doesn't know whether he slipped up and left a clue behind that will nail him for the Sutcliffe murder. For all he knows, we might be closing in on him right now. He has to move fast, break contact with the scene, and then try to escape back across the McCurtain, or possibly submerge deep back under cover here in the Republic. If you're digging up a twelve-thousand-year-old Caucasian corpse in North America, from Scorpius's viewpoint that has to be stopped *now.* I'll call up Jason's old boss, General Drones. He knows me, professionally and socially through Jason and his old NVA crowd, and I'll explain the whole thing to him so he can get air defense on the alert. They'll listen to him a lot quicker than me, and it will be faster than my trying to go through the NDF chain of command on the ground here. Tom, you need to evacuate Lost Creek. If nothing happens you can just blame it on me, say I'm coming down with Alzheimers and I had a panic attack or something, but this is the only way I can think of Scorpius can permanently remove that archaeological site as a threat to his ideology."

"Mmm . . . if you're right, that will also tip him off," said Tom. "He might get spooked and disappear."

"Tom, Ally and Bobby are out there tonight!" Campbell snapped at him.

"I know they are, sir. But I want to try something. Let me get back to you." Horakova hung up.

Campbell cursed the younger man, and then realized he didn't have time for recriminations. He dialed the personal number of the old NVA man A.J. Drones, now retired but still a voice that could cut through red tape. He was right about Drones still having major juice. Half an hour after Campbell got him on the phone, the entire northeastern and southeastern border area's air defense command went on full alert. Then Campbell sat back in his chair and waited for Horakova to call back, fighting the urge to lose his cool and his dignity and call first. Again he had to remind himself that this was a State Security case and, lifelong friends though they were, Tom was under no obligation to even so much as give him the time of day. The hours crept by and the phone was silent. In the Guard station outside his office door he could hear the noise of the night shift coming on. The one time the phone rang it was Millie wanting to know if he was coming home soon. "I need to stay here for a while, Mil," he told her.

She caught his tone of voice. "Is something happening?" she asked.

"Maybe," he admitted. "I need to be here if it does."

Bob never actually talked to Millie about his work in detail, but somehow or other she always seemed to know almost as much as he did. It bordered on the telepathic. She was silent for a while. "It's them, isn't it? They're trying to hurt us again, aren't they?"

"Yes," he told her.

"All my life they've been trying to hurt me and my family, from the time that nigger swaggered into our house in Chicago and tried to take me away. They never give up, do they?" she said almost conversationally.

"No," he said. "They never give up."

"I'll put your dinner in the microwave," she said.

"Thanks, honey."

Bob considered calling out his copter again and flying up to the Lost Creek site, just to be doing something, but it was risky in the dark and was probably pointless in any case. *So here I am again, just sitting on my ass waiting for death and horror to happen,* he thought to himself bitterly. *Let's hope the result is a little better this time.*

At about ten thirty the phone rang. "Colonel Campbell?" said a voice. "This is Major Hampton Parry from the Ninetieth ADA at Ellis Field in Helena. I'm calling to let you know that ten minutes ago a missile of undetermined type was fired from what we presume to be a mobile launcher in the Deer Lodge National Park over on the American side. It came in low and really fast, supersonic speed."

"Were you able to intercept?" asked Campbell, his mouth dry.

"Yes, sir. Goop gun got it about twelve miles outside Anaconda. It was heading toward Lost Creek, all right. There was one hell of an explosion. Not nuclear, no radiation detected, but we're talking CL-20, DNAF warhead, something like that. Looks like there was only minimal damage on the ground, but there's debris scattered over a huge area. Local firefighters and NDF personnel are on the scene, and we've got recovery teams on the way out there to scavenge up whatever bits and pieces we can. Looks like you were right, sir. If not for your warning we might not have been able to react in time and it might have hit Lost Creek. Thank you, and congratulations."

A few minutes later the phone rang again. It was Captain Tom Horakova. "We got him," he said.

"Scorpius?" demanded Campbell.

"Well, he wasn't wearing a name tag or a Zodiac ring, but yeah, pretty sure." Horakova was silent for a bit. "Bob, it was Arne Wingard."

"What?" yelled Campbell, stunned. "I thought we'd ruled him out?"

"He ruled himself back in," said Horakova. "I took a long shot that a pro like we believed Scorpius to be wouldn't be satisfied with just calling in co-ordinates for a missile launch. He'd want to make sure, especially considering what lousy shots the Americans are. He'd want to plant a radio beacon somewhere on the site for the missile to home in on. I took some men and I sealed off the site, then we started searching the whole place from top to bottom as unobtrusively as we could, which

wasn't hard since they're all down there at the longhouse absolutely glued to that ancient burial site and the kid who's in it. We eventually found the beacon in a storage box in the Shack, bleeping away. About that time Wingard appeared on the exit road in his car, and tried to talk his way past the two Guards on duty. When they politely informed him that State Security had closed the site and he wasn't allowed to leave, he made a break for it. He shot one of your men. Guardsman Benjamin Poprilovich."

"Is Ben okay?" asked Campbell.

"Wounded twice, one cracked rib from a hit to the vest and a bullet in the face. He'll have a scar, but it's not fatal. The second Guardsman shot and killed Wingard. It was Bobby."

"Oh," said Campbell. "Is he all right?"

"Fine," said Tom.

"You heard that the Air Defense Artillery knocked down an incoming missile?" asked Campbell.

"Yeah, I heard," replied Tom. "You called it, Bob. The Republic owes you a big one. Again."

Campbell shook his head, although Horakova couldn't see him. "Wait, wait, if Arne Wingard was Scorpius, which I find damned hard to believe, then we're still looking for the hidden Jew."

"Correct," agreed Tom.

"Maybe the Jew is Scorpius and Wingard was an accomplice?"

"Could be," conceded Horakova. "I'm still out here at the site. I'll wrap it up and then I'm heading back to Missoula with a team to search Arne Wingard's home. I've taken the liberty of sending a couple of your Guards to sit on the place until we get there."

"Sure, sure. How are our foreign guests taking it?" asked Campbell.

"The only corpse they have time for is the one who's been dead for twelve millennia. I don't think they've even noticed Wingard is gone yet," said Tom in bemused exasperation.

"Have you told Ally yet? I know she'll be shocked and upset. Wingard was her professor and her mentor."

"I told her Bob had been in a shooting incident. I'm going to talk to her now. Not something I'm looking forward to. We still need to

keep an eye on these EPs," warned Tom. "One of them might still be an enemy agent in contact with our kosher friend."

"Who is probably planning more deviltry," said Bob. "See you tomorrow."

XXIX

The Secret Of The Mound

(32 years, seven months, and eleven days after Longview)

How have you made division of yourself?
An apple, cleft in two, is not more twin
Than these two creatures.
—Twelfth Night, Act V, Scene 1

In point of fact, Tom didn't come by the next day to give Bob Campbell the promised briefing. Instead he called that afternoon and left a message for Bob: "Something has come up regarding the investigation, but I can't give you all the details as yet. We're on the track of your Red Sea pedestrian. Don't worry, all shall be revealed in the fullness of time." Campbell bridled his impatience, assuming that BOSS had a lead on the mysterious undercover Jew and was hunting the unwelcome visitor in some other area of the Republic, or maybe beyond. A long arm was their stock in trade.

On his part, Jason Stockdale had a hellacious PR problem on his hands. He had to explain to the visiting foreign experts exactly how it came to be that their host scientist had turned out to be a traitor and a spy who had at least been involved in the murder of one of their colleagues, if not the actual killer himself, who had then tried to blow up the site and kill them all, and had subsequently been shot by his own country's police force while trying to escape. It was not the positive image the Republic wanted to present to the world. But in a quiet and completely unofficial way, completely disregarding the express instructions of the British and American governments, Frederick Haskins and Amanda

Wyrick stepped forward and took over the Lost Creek dig. Bob himself had spoken with Allura that morning, who took the shock better than he had hoped. "You know, I thought something was odd going on with Arne for the last couple of months," she told him sadly. "He wasn't himself, definitely. Oh, he was as sharp and perceptive in his work as ever, but there was something—well, *off* about his personality."

"Off in what way?" asked Bob keenly.

"He . . . well, one night about six weeks ago, we were working late out in the Shack. Bobby hadn't come out to the site that day and I was going to stay over at the Fairmont. Arne . . . well, he said certain things and made a *suggestion* . . . anyway, I figured I'd better drive back home that night after all."

"Did you tell Bobby?" asked Campbell.

"No, because Bobby might have called Arne out and maybe killed him in a duel, and not only does Lost Creek not need that kind of publicity, not to mention me personally, but I was sure that it was an aberration. Arne was just having some kind of midlife crisis or something."

"The French call it *le démon du midi*, the Demon of the Afternoon," said Campbell. "It's kind of a male menopause thing that makes old codgers like me forget their dignity and go chasing after girls young enough to be their daughters, or granddaughters in your case and Wingard's."

"What struck me as odd was not that Arne made a pass at me, so much, as how *unlike* him it was," said Allura. "His wife has been dead for years, and of course some men in his position with all kinds of girl students around would have really gone to town if they were so inclined, no need to mess with married women, but Arne never did. I asked him once why he didn't get married again. He held up his hand, where he still wore his wife's wedding ring, and he told me, 'I promised her forever and I meant it.' This is a guy who all of a sudden propositions a married woman he's known for years right out of the blue? Something wasn't right. Well, I guess we'll never know now."

"Then again, we might," demurred Campbell. "This isn't over, Ally, and we're going to have to get to the bottom of it. All the way to the bottom."

"Are you going to tell Bobby about Arne coming on to me?" she asked.

"No, although I think you should, but that's between you and him. But I may have to mention it to Tom. I mean it, we have to know what the devil has been going on here and why Wingard did what he did."

"Are you coming to Adam's press conference?" Allura asked him. The ancient skeleton discovered in the Lost Creek longhouse had been dubbed "Adam" by someone on the team. "We won't just be talking to Northwest newspapers and media, but most of the accredited foreign correspondents in the Republic. CNN, BBC, RTE, TeleFrance, Pravda, you name it."

"And this is going to be you and Wyrick and Haskins conducting the conference? Are they nuts? Do they realize what they'll face when they get back to their own countries?"

"They don't care," said Allura. "There's something about getting that iron heel of politically correct thought control off your neck, even for a short time, that seems to induce rebellious thoughts. I think they want to stay a while. They're hooked on Lost Creek, and Doctor Wyrick wants to know why Bella Sutcliffe was murdered, who was behind it. If it turns out it was her own government, I think she's going to raise all kinds of hell. Maybe if that's the case they'll back off on any retaliation for our visitors getting their hands dirty."

The next afternoon Robert got a call at his office from Tom, asking if he could come up. "I'm bringing somebody with me," he explained. Bob was astounded to observe that Tom's companion was none other than the commanding officer of the Bureau of State Security, General Stephen Capshaw, a David Niven-ish looking Englishman complete with tweeds and a Dunhill pipe. Bob stood to attention, something he rarely had to do these days, but Capshaw waved him back down into his seat. "No, no, Colonel, this is quite informal," he said. "Captain Horakova was very insistent that it was time we brought you up to speed, and I had to agree with him, since it was your flash of inspiration that prevented the enemy from blowing a large hole in a particularly sensitive bit of the Homeland."

"Should you tell him or should I, sir?" asked Horakova.

"Oh, you should, by all means, dear boy," said Capshaw, lighting his pipe and filling the office with fragrant tobacco smoke. "Colonel Campbell might just believe you. If I tell him, he'll think I've gone off my trolley."

"All right. You'd better have a seat, Bob," said Tom, suiting the action to the word. "This is going to be a little on the flabbergasting side. Before I start, how's Bobby Three doing?"

"He's a bit rattled still," replied Bob Two. "Unlike most of us from Jason's generation or mine, he's never had to kill a man before, especially someone he knew like Arne Wingard."

"He didn't kill Arne Wingard," said Tom.

"Uh, run that by me again?" asked Bob in surprise.

"He shot a Jew of Lithuanian descent, name unknown, but presumably the enemy agent code-named Scorpius," Tom told him.

"What?"

"When we searched decedent's home yesterday, we really took it apart, looking for any stashes where incriminating material might be hidden. One of our men noticed some scuff marks which indicated that the work bench in the basement had been moved. We moved the bench again and found it was covering a patch of newly-laid concrete. We got in a jack hammer, broke it up, and started digging. About four feet down we found a body. DNA analysis confirmed it was the body of Arne Wingard, the real Arne Wingard. He'd been dead about three months. There was enough left for our forensic doc to determine he had been strangled, frontally, in the same manner as Bella Sutcliffe."

"What in the name of . . . ?" Bob waved his hands vaguely in the air.

Capshaw nodded. "Exactly our feelings, Colonel."

Tom went on. "Bob, the man your son shot the other night, the man who has been successfully posing as Doctor Arne Wingard for the past several months, was some kind of replicant."

"You mean a clone?" asked Bob, stunned.

"No, not a clone, not a true one anyway, because the DNA didn't match."

"They made a duplicate Arne? How? Plastic surgery?"

"No, the pathologists who are now examining the remains in Olympia can't find any surgical scarring or any indication of medical alteration of this man's face or body," said Tom. "It's almost like they were able to grow this guy a new skin and a new facial bone structure. Not only that, his *retinas* matched, the blood vessel patterns in his eyes! That's how he was able to get into security areas at the lab and on the site that required a retinal scan. His voice pattern matches as well. We checked it using some of his recent recorded notes and comparing those with his old lectures. We don't have a clue how they did all this. I guess the NAR aren't the only ones who can finance mad scientists and give them their head to see what weird things they can accomplish. Bob, this man is almost a total biological copy of the original, with the exception of the DNA. Apparently whatever Israeli Doctor Frankenstein who cooked this monstrosity up for the Americans or East Canadians was able to replicate everything except that."

"It goes without saying that this opens a whole new can of worms in the field of espionage," said Capshaw glumly. "From now on quite literally anybody could be not what he or she seems. The implications are staggering. It's not just biological duplication. This was a major project. It has to be either the ONR or CSIS; they are the only enemy agencies with the resources and the obsessive hatred of the Republic required to carry out an operation this extensive and detailed. I'm rather leaning toward the East Canadians. Our existence seems to have driven them almost insane."

"Liberal democracies can't keep their power grid or their transportation system running, they can't feed their own people, half the children in their countries are without shoes and eighty per cent of the population has no medical or dental care, most of the adults are illiterate and nothing works, but they still have money to spend on madness like this?" asked Robert in anger.

"So it would seem," agreed Capshaw. "Never underestimate the power of hate, Colonel. Odd that they still call *us* that, isn't it? Haters. And yet they took infinite pains over this project to fulfill their own hate. They were able to instill in this biocopy a lifetime's worth of archaeological knowledge, enough of Wingard's personal information and habits so that he was able to move among people who had known

him for years without raising suspicion. Speech patterns, likes and dislikes, his gait and his mannerisms, everything. Apparently he was able to mimic the original's very personality to the point where no one noticed anything amiss."

"One person did," said Bob.

"Eh? What do you mean?" asked Tom. Bob told them about the replicant's attempt to seduce Allura Campbell, and Ally's impression that something wasn't right about her old professor.

"Indeed?" commented Capshaw drily, swirling smoke from his pipe. "I suppose the traditional lust of Jewish men for beautiful golden-haired gentile women was one thing the replicant couldn't completely suppress. I've never met Mrs. Campbell, but I'm told she greatly resembles her heroic mother."

"Greatly, yes," said Bob.

"Scorpius would have known who she was, of course," mused Capshaw. "No doubt that added to the piquancy of the temptation to fall out of character for a moment." Bob scowled as he felt bile rising in his throat.

Tom sighed, "We figure one night Arne Wingard must have heard a knock on his door, and he opened it to find himself staring himself in the face. Then out comes the garrote and his own face was the last thing he saw as he died."

"Jesus Christ!" muttered Bob in shock. "It sounds like that old horror movie from a hundred years ago, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.* What are you going to do now? Is this going to be classified as top secret? What about Arne's kids? Are they going to have to go through life believing their father was a spy and a traitor?"

"We considered trying to clamp the lid on, yes," said Capshaw with a nod. "However, you're quite correct. The problem with being the gents in the white hats is that we have to act like it. On most occasions, anyway. Besides, it wouldn't do to have one of our most distinguished academics end his career with a blot like that on his copybook. We will therefore be publicizing the whole affair and also making public whatever we can find out about the medical and biochemical process through which Doctor Frankenstein created this monster. Our way of

letting the noseys know we're onto their little game. Not to mention giving a credibility boost to the Lost Creek archaeological site."

"Wingard's children will be coming in for the funeral tomorrow," said Tom. "Needless to say, the remains in the coffin will be their real father. You might want to let Bobby Three know he doesn't have to feel guilty over anything. He didn't kill a man. He killed a Jew."

* * *

Three weeks later, on a hot summer night, Bob Campbell, Tom Horakova, Jason Stockdale, and Allura Campbell sat around a desk in the Shack. Air conditioners rumbled in the windows and sheet lightning flickered in the black sky outside. They were looking at a small, sealed box of clear plastic, about the size of a cigar box. Inside lay an object about the size and shape of a stick of chewing gum, black with age, yet with a few silvery threads visible running through it. "We found it in the main burial chamber in the mound," Allura told them softly, looking at it in fascination.

"Along with the human remains?" asked Tom.

"Yes," she said. "With the four ceremonially laid out skeletons. Two males and two females. Two couples, one Cro-Magnon and one modern Caucasian. Buried together, in the same tomb at the same time, between twelve and thirteen thousand years ago. In the center of the chamber was a slab of crudely cut, pure white marble. We've no idea where that came from, but the only major sources for marble in North America are in the south, Georgia and Alabama, and scattered deposits in Colorado. How it got to Montana is anybody's guess right now. The marble slab was clearly an altar. There were skeletal remains of doves and eagles and owls on the altar, sacrificial animals, as well as worked jewelry of gold and jade, copper and silver. And this."

"And no one has *any* idea what the hell it is?"

"Doctor Haskins and Doctor Wyrick did a field spectroscope on it," said Jason quietly. "It's metal of some kind, but we can't figure out what. The two knife blades also found in the tomb on the male skeletons appear to be cold-rolled steel, in the Solutrean shape of course, and the implications of that fact alone are earth-shaking. Someone was trading

things to these primitive people that simply could not have existed anywhere on earth at that time, in any version of the past that we have ever imagined. But this object? The metal can't be identified, but Alvin Fortis and Ralph Tarricone were the first to whisper the suggestion that it may be part of a circuit board of some kind."

"I don't know what to say," said Bob, shaking his head.

"Right now there isn't anything *to* say," said Jason. "The hell of it is, that whole Scorpius thing may prove to be unnecessary. The liberals may carry the day by default. This is just too fantastic. I just don't think anybody in the scientific world will believe us now, no matter what."

"Then we keep on plugging away with the truth until they do," said Bob. "It's what we did with race and the Jewish question, and what we'll do with this. We're not alone and isolated and helpless any more, Jason. We found our courage, we freed ourselves with weapons in our hands, and we seized state power from the evil people who held it. Now we can use that state power for truth."

"Any developments regarding our more modern mystery?" asked Jason. "Any idea why that—whatever it was murdered Bella Sutcliffe?"

"The BOSS technical bureau carefully dissected the *faux* Wingard's phone byte by byte of software and filament by filament of hardware, and they found the electronic and cyber-equivalent of a false bottom where he kept his real data. Including his e-mails and texts," Tom told them. "We still don't know what his real name was, but we know he was CSIS. General Capshaw called that one right. His handler was a code name, Carlotta, whom we believe to be an ex-Israeli named Yair Zalman. One of their baddest and maddest dogs. As to the murder, we've had to piece that together and there's a lot of guesswork still, and we may never know it all unless he filed some kind of report with his bosses which our techno-geeks can hack, but judging from the texts he apparently picked up on Bella Sutcliffe's liberalism and attitude, and he started a subtle phone-flirting thing with her almost from the moment she got off the plane, in the guise of Arne Wingard. She found the idea that she could add the head of the Northwest Republic's archaeological team to her list of conquests amusing. That night he lured her out to the pool after hours, where she expected some hanky-panky, but instead he

made some kind of pitch to her for information or assistance. I guess like all Jews, he wasn't quite as slick as he thought he was. Maybe Bella was too professional and dedicated to her work, or maybe she just didn't like men trying to use her, since it was usually the other way around. But Scorpius got a bad vibe off her and realized he had made a potentially deadly mistake by revealing himself, and so without thinking twice, he corrected the mistake. He whipped out his trusty noose and strangled her.

"Then he kept his cool. He had been planning on using the crude X-ray machine to contaminate the Lost Creek artifacts in some way and ruin their carbon-dating, but now he knew there would be police attention focused on the Fairmont, and he would be caught with it in his possession. It wasn't something he could flush down the toilet, and simply hiding it would have raised more questions had it been found. Given the likelihood of its discovery anyway, he decided to put it to good use. He took Bella's room key, went up and let himself in, and hid the machine where it was sure to be found. Either he wore gloves or wiped everything clean, then he calmly went back down to the pool where he had hidden Bella's body somewhere, put the room key back into her pocket, and dumped her in the pool. Bob called it, almost from the first. It was largely done as a distraction."

"I figure the X-ray thing was only a Plan B he was diddling around with in his mind anyway," said Bob. "He would have had to set it up and use it twice, once here in the Shack and once in the lab and the lab storage area at the university. He might have managed one, but probably not both, No, he had to destroy this site completely, to prevent any further embarrassing discoveries. The Americans must have had that missile launcher moved into place at least a couple of days beforehand, before he killed Bella Sutcliffe. I think he always intended to obliterate the site. I'd like to think that he somehow let this slip to Bella and despite her distaste for us racist whiteboys, she refused to go along with a murder plot."

"You've told Amanda this?" asked Ally.

"I did," said Tom. "I didn't have any trouble convincing her. Like most Americans, she has no doubt in her mind that her government would murder another American for virtually no reason as part of one

of their vicious little schemes. We may be barbarians in her eyes, but barbarians at least are honest."

The thunder began rolling down from the hills, and it grew louder. Bob went to the door and opened it onto the hot night outside. "That's the minor mystery" he said. "The big mystery is out there. You guys are finding more of it every day. Who the hell *were* these people? Where did they come from? What were their lives like? Who was rolling around trading them steel blades and giving them circuit boards to worship on their altars? Why did they disappear for millennia until the Vikings rocked up in Vinland?"

"We'll know one day," said Ally confidently. "Did I mention the bark and wooden tablets we found?"

"The ones that seem to contain unknown writing?" asked Bob. "Yes, you did. But how the hell will we ever be able to translate it? There can be no Rosetta Stone that old. Computers can analyze patterns and so on, but so long as we don't know what one single word or symbol means, I don't see how we can ever make any sense of it."

"We will, one day," said Allura. "I don't know how, but we will. We're Aryans. We can accomplish anything we want."

"Well, at least now we know for certain that we were here first," said Bob. "The Indians must have wiped us out eventually. But why were there so *few* of us? That's always been the problem. We're quality, but seldom quantity. Always so few white men and so damned many muds. I guess that's why we didn't make it stick the last time around."

"We will this time," Jason Stockdale told them.

Part Four

Bordertowns

The Foggy Dew

Down a misty street one autumn morn,
in Coeur d'Alene drove I,
When arméd lines of marching men
in squadrons passed me by.
No pipes did hum, no battle drum
did sound its loud tattoo.
But a lone ship's bell on the lake's dark
swell rang out in the foggy dew.

Right proudly high over Coeur d'Alene
they hung out a flag of war.
'Twas better to die 'neath a Northwest sky
than on some Mideastern shore.
And from the plains and forests round,
strong men came hurrying through;
While America's sons on their bombing
runs flew in through the foggy dew.

Oh the night grew black and the rifles'
crack made Zion's hirelings reel.
As the moon rose higher seven tongues of
fire did shine o'er the lines of steel.
As each round did fly came a battle cry that
the whole of the world once knew,
And when morning broke still the war flag
shook out its fold in the foggy dew

'Twas America stole our sons away
that Israel might be free.
Now their lonely graves lie in endless waves
on the fringe of the Persian sea.
But had they died by Pierce's side, or
fought with Winston true,

Their graves we'd keep where the heroes sleep,
'neath the shroud of the foggy dew.

The bravest fell, and a solemn bell
rang mournfully and clear,
For those who died in Coeur d'Alene
in the autumn of the year.
And the world it gazed with deep amaze
at those fearless men, but few
Who bore the fight that freedom's light
might shine through the foggy dew.

'Twas down the street I drove again, and
my heart with grief was sore,
For I parted then with valiant men
whom I never shall see more.
But to and fro in my dreams I go, and
I kneel and pray for you.
For slavery fled! O glorious dead! When
you fell in the foggy dew.

—The Second Generation, *Songs of Freedom* album
©Bifrost Music, Seattle

XXX

Running The Cat Roads

(40 years and ten months after Longview)

Man is born to live, not prepare for life.
—Boris Pasternak

On a hot and dusty afternoon in August, Civil Guard Lieutenant Robert Campbell the Third—Allura's husband, Bobby Three—sat behind a sturdy wooden desk in his office, staring up at a huge map that covered almost one entire wall of the room. It was a topographical chart that showed his detachment's entire sector in every detail that was possible to put onto paper: every back road, every creek, every ridge and wash, every ranch or farmstead, every building larger than a chicken coop, and most of the chicken coops as well. Old Interstate 15, as it was still known in the United States—the Border Highway as it was known in the Northwest American Republic—ran through the map like a burning crimson scar.

Bobby, aged 33, was now the Guard's station commander for the Basin, Montana border police detachment. His father, the 54-year-old Colonel Robert Campbell Junior, was now commanding officer of the CG's entire Border Division, which included all the units and districts abutting the Border Highway on the NAR side to a depth of thirty miles inland. Bobby was only three months into his tour as station commander in Basin, and so he hadn't yet become completely familiar with his turf. He studied the map as much as he could in his spare moments in the office, trying to translate the lines and colors into a solid landscape in his mind, matching it with what he'd seen out in the area.

His office was housed in the older and more picturesque part of the station, a two-story red brick structure fronting onto the small town's single street. It had once been the local firehouse. Basin, Montana was perched in a high, narrow canyon among scrubby, rocky hills along the Border Highway, 27 miles north of Butte and 35 miles south of Helena, and about ten miles from the Continental Divide. Bobby Campbell could go to the window at the end of the corridor and look eastward into the Elkhorn Mountains in the United States. Somewhat to the south, visible if he were to stick his head out the same window, was Basin Creek, which flowed through the center of the little town to its confluence with a larger stream, the Boulder River, which in turn flowed eastward Across The Road, as the local saying went, and past Basin's opposite number on the American side, the border town of Boulder.

Suddenly Corporal Mike Sweeney, a brawny young red-haired man in Guardsman green, stuck his head in the door. "Lieutenant? Just got a call on the sub frequency down in the commo room. Johnny's made it Across The Road."

"Outstanding!" said Bobby. "His load's okay?"

"Yes sir, the load is intact. Hatch is right behind him in the truck. Looks like they had no problem at all on this run, other than some greedy cops in St. Paul trying to shake them down, but Johnny sorted them out."

"He didn't shoot them, did he?" asked Campbell.

"No, sir. At least he didn't mention it if he did."

"Any problems with the Montana National Guard patrols?" asked Bobby.

"No, sir," replied Sweeney. "I guess they were all on their lunch break or whatever when the boys rolled on through. Jefferson County deputies didn't even chase them this time."

"They must be really getting sloppy Over The Road, there," said Campbell. "Or else the Selkirk boys are that good."

"The Selkirks are good, sir," confirmed Sweeney, who had been in Basin for two years and knew the gentlemen in question. "But County's not really the problem. Ben Lomax over in Boulder doesn't really give a damn. He's the live and let live type. Likes to do a quiet shift and

go home on time at night. The Selkirks are local boys, or they were before independence, anyway. Their grandfather's an Old Fighter, and so they ended up on our side of the line after Longview, but they've still got friends and family all over, on both sides. I think the boys spend half their time in Boulder. Ben knows them, and he knows they're not bringing anything dangerous through his county, or taking out anything more dangerous than untaxed weed. Once a runner makes it into Jefferson County, they're usually home free, so long as they don't run down people's livestock or drive right down Main Street in Boulder and honk their horns at him. Which is what precipitated that last chase incident."

"Bet that jackass in Billings isn't okay with it," said Campbell. "Keeps running off at the mouth about those in what's left of his fair state doing business with the devil, and all."

Sweeney shrugged. "Yeah, well, Governor Wellman's a tub-thumper who owes his election to the evangelicals, and yeah, he probably does think we're the devil, and he gins up a big anti-smuggling campaign every couple of years or so. But he knows as well as everybody that half his state's income is related to moonlight merchandising in some way, or some other dealing with the Republic. Hell, Longview did give us the best part of the state, as that shower in Billings never ceases to complain. Ever since the United States went all funny about beef, Montana people have had two ways to make a living: they can get hold of a government check of some kind, or they can smuggle stuff in and out of the Republic. The lazy drunks go for the welfare, the lazy crooks get a state job, and the crooks with initiative and a sense of adventure run the cat roads."

"They coming in soon?"

"Yes, sir," said Sweeney. "About ten minutes, Johnny said."

"Their connections here already?" asked Bobby.

"Yes, sir, since about ten this morning. The courier from the Health Service is here to pick up the medical stuff, the revenue guy from Olympia is here for his cut and Ed Jones, the buyer from Nordstroms, got in about an hour ago. They're all down in the diner drinking coffee and stuffing themselves with Shirley's cherry pie. They always do when they're here."

"How often is that?" asked Bobby. "I thought the Selkirks only went out every three months or so?"

"They meet other runners here, every couple of weeks," said Sweeney. "Nordstroms gets a lot of their specialty items through Basin. Lots of fancy booze, champagne and imported beer, electronics and parts for electronics we don't make equivalencies for here in the Republic for one reason or another. Swiss and Belgian chocolate, high-end ladies' shoes and evening gowns and perfume, fancy menswear, luxury items we don't have the time or inclination to make here in the Republic but which people still want to buy. When somebody wants to buy something, somebody's gonna sell it to them, and if we don't make it here they're gonna smuggle it in. We're a popular destination for international entrepreneurs."

"I haven't met the Selkirk brothers yet. I'll go down and wait for them and introduce myself. Professional courtesy, them being a criminal element and all," said Lieutenant Campbell, rising from the desk. He had just enough of a policeman's mindset so that conniving in a smuggling operation felt odd to him, but in actual fact, as far as the Guard was concerned, none of this was illegal. The Northwest American Republic was a free country, and if a citizen wanted to butcher a steer and drive over to Boulder and sell it off the back of a truck for New American dollars, or trade it for whatever he wanted so long as it wasn't Zionist crap or dirty videos, then it was his perfect right to do so. Or if he wanted to drive a trunk full, or for that matter a whole truck full of marijuana cigarettes purchased in bulk from the local co-op store at twenty cents a pack, and sell them over the border for 24 New American or 30 East Canadian dollars per pack, then that was his business as well, so long as the Revenue Commissioners' tax was paid on the purchasing end, which could easily be done while still making a huge profit. The Republic could always use the foreign exchange. The Northwest was very much a free enterprise-based society; it was capitalism that had always been the problem, and the two were by no means the same thing.

The NAR had very few laws. No one was allowed to kill or abuse a child, or kill an unarmed person with premeditation or with poison. You weren't allowed to hold up liquor stores, or burn down people's

houses just to watch the glow. No one was allowed to advocate Zionism or agitate for the return of the Northwest to the U.S.A., or spy for a foreign government. Boys and girls graduating high school went into the Labor Service, and after that boys went into the army for two years, no exceptions. Beyond that, the law didn't take too much interest in how people lived their lives.

* * *

Across The Road the situation was a little more complex. Things had always been kind of nebulous on the immediate American side of the old McCurtain, where Americans lived in the shadow of the vile and satanic Racist Entity itself just across four lanes of asphalt. To be sure, now that white people had mostly cleared out of the big cities, things in the U.S.A as a whole weren't anywhere nearly as bad overall as they had been 45 years before, at the time of 10/22, nor even as bad in some respects as they had been 28 years ago under Hunter Wallace.

The American town stood on the eastern side of old Interstate 15, on the north bank of the Boulder River. Boulder was larger than its stroppy little opposite number Across The Road. Where Basin sat up in a high mountain pass, Boulder was down in a lush valley, surrounded by a rolling prairie broken with creeks and fine stands of cottonwoods and Balsam pines, the earth green with grass in spring, with blue-black mountain ranges towering all around. Jefferson County, Montana, had been almost evenly split between the United States and the Republic under the terms of the Longview treaty, but it had to be said that in this case it was the Americans who had ended up with the better and prettier half.

Boulder and Basin were only a few miles apart, but when the two towns were separated by the border four decades before, it also separated families, homesteads and land, water rights, businesses from customers and people from the shopping and medical facilities they needed. It had cut children off from their schools and men and women from their jobs. Not to mention the physical and psychic scars caused by the murder and bloodshed of five years of guerrilla warfare in the district. The Northwest was always mostly white, and in many places throughout

the Homeland, the War of Independence had been a civil war between whites, nowhere more so than in Montana. In Montana it had been bad: father against son, brother against brother, and sometimes sister against sister and husband against wife. A longstanding community that had once been whole was now cut in two by the Border Highway. There were graves on both sides of the border. In the minds of many, the earth of those graves was still fresh.

Twelve years later had come the brief occupation of Jefferson County by the NDF during the Seven Weeks War. It had only lasted for a few weeks, before the powder-gray uniforms and coal-scuttle helmets had climbed into their tanks and trucks and Heeps and rolled back Over The Road on the signing of the armistice. That hadn't been too bad; folks had mostly stayed indoors and avoided the visitors. General A.J. Drones had ruled his troops with an iron hand; God help the NDF soldier who took so much as a can of soda without paying for it, or who so much as looked cross-eyed at a local girl. Drones had his company commanders charging men and giving them fines and extra duty even for swearing or using foul language in front of a local.

After the Seven Weeks the United States of America, while still technically in existence, had kind of slipped away from the more remote areas of the country as it struggled to wrestle with 150 years' worth of demons and big, bad chickens now come home to roost. In the intervening years, the people of both communities had arrived at a *modus vivendi*. Before the Seven Weeks, the border of East Montana had been crawling both with troops and with the hated paramilitary private contractors, but under the terms of the peace treaty everything west of Billings had been de-militarized. The McCurtain had quietly withered away and was now largely a dead letter, although the Montana National Guard still patrolled the border and manned some of the checkpoints. But others were open, and it was no longer a case of shoot-on-sight for anyone with a white skin who set foot on the crumbling asphalt of Interstate 15 headed in a westerly direction. Most of the minefields and fences along the McCurtain had been destroyed by the NDF during the war, and were never re-built, nor were the ADL and SPLC's mercenaries allowed back on the border. This had caused the level of tension and bloodshed to drop precipitously; the American-Montanans

had welcomed the new peaceful life and absence of body-armored thugs from their midst, and the Northwest government had welcomed the ability to shift more of its own troop and police presence to the roiling Aztlan border, where the exact opposite situation prevailed.

Not that there was much of an American military left in the years after the war. The Montana National Guard maintained a number of posts along the 400-mile frontier, one of them in Jefferson County, and periodically they and local police would pursue and sometimes intercept blockade runners on their side of the line. If the smugglers were Americans looking to make some cash by running microchips and antibiotics into the Republic and bringing back a load of Red Hook beer to sell, as most of them were, then it was their tough luck. They knew the risks of what was still legally Unauthorized Contact. But runners like the young Selkirk brothers posed a problem. They were Northwest citizens and residents, and under no circumstances did the NAR *ever* allow one of its own to face an American court of any kind. The memory of the black-robed and silk-suited tyrants of Zion, often excremental of skin and prominent of proboscis, had been seared into the Republic's national consciousness until it was now almost genetically imprinted.

In the past such incidents had sometimes escalated into cross-border rescue raids by SS commandos and retaliatory incursions by the NDF to grab hostages for trade, the kind of thing that might have started another war had there been any effective United States or Canadian military left. The East Montana state government was too weak to stand a chance against the Northmen, and there was virtually no help available from what was left of the American central government. The Americans responded by doing what Americans have always done best: they said one thing and did another. Over the years a strictly unofficial arrangement had been arrived at. When an NAR resident or citizen was arrested for blockade running on the American side of the line, their vehicles and the contraband they contained were confiscated, the proceeds usually ending up in the pockets of cops and local politicians, while the smugglers themselves were hauled down to the nearest border crossing and kicked back into the Republic.

When beef had become illegal under One Nation Indivisible and huge swaths of Montana land had been confiscated by the federal government to be emptied of white people and given back to the Indians for casinos and the buffalo for grazing, most of the surviving Jefferson County ranchers had reluctantly switched to dairy cattle, crops such as wheat or sorghum if their land would bear it, or even fruit orchards and truck gardens. Now beef was legal again in the States. In some states. Well, sort of. Maybe. If you paid a tax on it. Or maybe not. Nobody seemed to know or even care. Nobody really seemed to be in charge any more on the once all-meddling federal level. For those ranchers who still elected to raise beef cattle, there were several abattoirs in town. Unmarked freezer trucks periodically showed up from somewhere, bought the meat, and drove off eastward, which was about all folks knew about it. When dressed beef was short in Jefferson, their friends and neighbors from Across The Road who still raised beef cattle by the ton to feed a nation of barbarian carnivores were always willing to help out.

There had never been any border posts on the NAR side of the line, and the few crossings on the American side that were manned these days didn't even have any customs officials, since technically speaking there wasn't supposed to be any population movement between the two countries. A few jokers on the internet still posted maps of the region with nothing but a blank space where the Northwest Republic was, along with waves and mermaids and sea serpents, marked in archaic calligraphy, "Here be Monsters." Washington D.C.'s wishful thinking to the contrary, after Longview travel between the two halves of Jefferson County had never completely ceased, even in the worst days of the McCurtain. Just as the Israelis had never succeeded in choking off the Palestinians completely from the rest of their people with Bremer walls and electric fences, neither did the United States government succeed in completely tearing Jefferson County, Montana, in two and boxing up both halves separately. When someone had property and loved ones on the other side, one found a way to get through the barbed wire and the minefields for the occasional visit. And back.

Since the end of the Seven Weeks War and demilitarization, travel back and forth across the Border Highway was now a regular if rather

cautious and infrequent thing for some people, although there were those on both sides who as a matter of personal principle and bitter memory had never set foot on the other side of I-15 for the entire forty years. Both sides were acutely aware of the risk of incidents that might get blown up into something worse. There was a sort of hotline phone system between the Civil Guard commander in Basin and the Jefferson County sheriff; Ben Lomax and now Lieutenant Bobby Campbell the Third both carried their special phones with them all the time, just in case. Completely illegal in the U.S., of course, technically a Class A federal felony in fact, Unauthorized Contact, but American law was now more or less optional in East Montana. In Boulder and Basin, stores and business owners accepted New American dollars, Northwest credits, and usually East Canadian dollars, sometimes marking prices in all three currencies unless the Boulder folks got word that some kind of inspector or big-wig from Billings was coming, in which case they hid all such tell-tale signs until the suit was gone. The big nightmare was that something might happen somewhere out on the cat roads involving gunfire and hot pursuit and dead bodies. Everyone hoped something like that could be resolved without starting another war.

Boulder was now a town of around ten thousand people, with as many more living outside the city limits in rural Jefferson County. In point of fact, Jefferson County was now more populous and more prosperous than it had been before the War of Independence, due in large measure to a lot of smuggling-related activity, and also due to people who were moving in to escape the diversity elsewhere, although the old American tradition of never, ever openly admitting to racial motivations for one's behavior still held. Despite being perched right on the edge of the unspeakable Racist Entity itself—or perhaps because of it—American Jefferson County had seen a small but steady trickle of people moving in over the past generation, mostly young white couples with children. Although no such thing was ever mentioned out loud, it was quietly accepted that part of the reason for a young family to move to the Montana border country was to shelter beneath the bristling guns of the NDF if the instability which plagued the rest of North America ever tipped over into outright madness and chaos, as frequently appeared possible. At the very least, many otherwise patriotic Americans who

officially hewed to the line about the Northwest Republic being the Dark Kingdom of Mordor made sure they were within an easy bolt of the Border Highway, if and when the U.S.A. finally came crashing down for good.

* * *

The rest of the United States was slowly crumbling away, like a wet and stinking trash heap in a landfill under a hot summer sun. Jefferson County and almost all of East Montana outside Billings and Bozeman and American Butte was still very predominantly white, a phenomenon which seemed odd since only about 25 percent of the U.S. population was white now. And yet there were whole huge swaths of mostly rural countryside like Montana, the Dakotas, Iowa, Kansas, as well as large sections of the Midwest in Illinois and Missouri and the Appalachian mountains that on a local county-by-county basis were demographically whiter than they had been a hundred years before.

The pattern which had begun to emerge in the middle of the 20th Century had coalesced. Black and brown minorities were now almost all in the huge, sprawling cities that festered and crumbled like maggot-infested swamps, especially east of the Mississippi. The country's remaining whites lived in enclaves, some spanning several states, consisting mostly of the small towns and remote wide-open spaces of flyover country. The acting federal capitol of Burlington, Vermont, at almost 400,000 people, was the largest wholly functional city remaining in the country. The legal and semantic acrobatics performed by the United States government to *keep* Burlington functional by keeping it 90 percent white offered some of the funniest and most bemusing reading in American history.

The remaining 20th Century megalopoli lay on the continent like moaning, dying dinosaurs. They were like huge nature preserves, fenced off and patrolled by American military contractors in order to keep the savages on the reservation, although of course in a nation that still adamantly refused to admit that race exists, this was never explicitly stated. The majority of the American "defense" budget no longer went to maintain a sprawling empire of overseas bases, as in the past century,

but for actual defense against the millions of black, brown, and bilious yellow inhabitants of the nation's Designated Urban Zones (DUZs). There were for all intents and purposes no white residents left in the top 50 American cities, except for outside administrative personnel and a tiny number of completely degenerate whiggers who had merged with the darkness and became totally negrified; in another generation they would be gone, leaving nothing but a muddy stain running like diseased diarrhea through the ebony for a while.

The true purpose of the massive security cordons around the cities was disguised in a farrago of political and legalese double-talk that whirled around the subject like Cossack dancers doing the Trepak. A colossal legal and administrative system had been created to disguise the fact that America's main national goal was now to keep millions of non-whites corralled in huge urban detention centers so they would not break out and start wandering the land in gigantic migrations like so many locusts, roaming from place to place and moving on after they had consumed every resource and slaughtered everyone with a white skin. There had been a few such events in past years, which had been dealt with bloodily, and the survivors herded back into Atlanta, St. Louis, and Baltimore. These episodes were barely reported at the time and then swiftly erased from the national memory by the state-controlled media. Even *in extremis*, the American ruling class would not stop lying about race, so ingrained had the habit become. They would do anything not to have to admit that race was a deadly reality the United States was now desperately trying to survive.

Electric power and as many basic utilities as possible were supplied to the cities, at least sporadically, by the United States Urban Administration Department (UAD), from heavily fortified generating and water pumping and sewage treatment facilities. Repairs were irregular, but when necessary were made under heavy armed escort from the various mercenary outfits hired by the government for the purpose. Local police were non-existent or completely negrified or mestizo, and therefore useless. The American military itself was too small and poorly equipped for this mission, since the United States government basically no longer had any income from taxation and was

dependent on whatever the Federal Reserve decided to give them each year for pocket money.

Living conditions in the cities for the teeming black and brown population were indescribable, like something out of a nightmare. Cannibalism was common when the government-issued junk food rations ran short. Infant mortality was believed to be about 50 percent, although no one knew for sure. The average lifespan seemed to be about 42 or 43 for both men and women, although the massive homicide rates for young males skewed the estimates. Internal government in places like Atlanta, Miami, Houston and Chicago had been more or less handed over to the ethnic gangs, who spent most of their time engaging in tribal wars through the grass-grown streets and the derelict buildings. The bitterest feuds were between the American-born blacks and the Africans, with both negro factions pausing every now and then to turn on the wretched Haitians and slaughter them.

All DUZ residents automatically received EBT cards and lifelong welfare checks beginning at age 15; the system was riddled with fraud and abuse from top to bottom, of course, but then it always had been, and America's social contract had always been clear: *give minorities money*, enough to keep them drunk and stoned and fed on junk food, or else the minorities riot. The original idea was to embed GPS and ID chips in each card so the authorities could keep some kind of track of what was going on in the concrete jungles, but now most of the spy satellite system from the past 70 years no longer worked, and no one seemed to remember how to repair them. As it had been with Egypt and Rome, certain vital technological skill sets were being lost now, because the United States government had run out of qualified white techies due to the declining level of enrollment of white males in higher education. They had tried to train niggers and sub-continental Asians how to do things like maintaining satellite networks; the results were somewhat less than optimum.

The cities were covered with sealed high-security ATMs that dispensed a purely local currency as a measure of influx control; you couldn't spend Houston dollars in Baltimore or New Orleans dollars in Chicago. Keeping these ATMs supplied with local currency was a major function of the security forces and resulted in the most firefights

with the locals who wanted to rob the armored half-tracks, or else who just wanted to kill white men.

There was no heavy industry or major business remaining in the mega-urban areas, and only limited private enterprise in the form of Asian merchants who maintained private security detachments from their own ethnic groups to protect their fortified stores. These were re-stocked by cargo helicopter in most places; it was too dangerous to drive supply convoys overland into labyrinthine cities where the black and brown denizens would kill for a boxed mac-and-cheese dinner and sell their children for a case of bottled water.

Supplies and provisions were also shipped into the cities in bulk by the superannuated U.S. government to favored local warlords, who were often designated as mayors or governors—or in the case of black-run DUZs like Detroit, Atlanta, and Birmingham, as Head Nigger In Charge. (A title deliberately chosen by the black strongmen who ran those cities, and by no means a humorous one. These men were bestial savages.) These American tributaries maintained personal power through the control of the food supply and also through the distribution or withholding of the welfare checks, AA batteries, cell phones, bottled water, sugary soft drinks, heavy gooey candy, salty grain and potato-based snacks, and other necessities of black and brown life. The whole situation was like dealing with about 50 Mogadishus.

New York City had finally been declared unfit for human habitation three years before. The last of the white and Jewish super-rich had been evacuated to their mansions on Long Island, and then a massive wall had been built along the Sunken Meadow and Sagtikos Parkways, severing the island from the abomination. The rest of the five boroughs were sealed off with minefields, Bremer walls and hundreds of miles of razor wire, guarded by the New York Containment Corps of mostly European mercenaries, the most highly paid and professional soldiers on the planet, with only one mission: whatever was in New York, stayed in New York. The Big Apple had simply been abandoned as a gangrened limb that had to be amputated. Most of its polyglot, half-insane inhabitants had been sealed in, like locking the doors of a lunatic asylum, walking away, and leaving it to the inmates. When a foreign journalist had timidly asked an officer of the NYCC what the people

inside the city would eat when the grocery stores and restaurants were all picked clean, he told her brutally, "What the fuck do you think? They'll eat each other!" The occasional sounds detected by sensors from within the city were sinister and chilling, and hinted at horrors in the empty concrete canyons and dumps and residential wastelands. Sometimes observers in the watchtowers saw dark forms loping in packs amid the ruins in the distance.

There were a few exceptions to the destruction of the cities. The greater Boston and Cambridge area and the states of Massachusetts, Vermont, and New Hampshire had been transformed into a tightly-controlled security zone called the New England Union, so that the remnants of America's left-wing, liberal and Jewish ruling élite could continue to exist in some kind of physical safety, protected from the horror and chaos they had spent the past century creating. Maine established a number of trade and legal agreements with New Brunswick and the Ottawa régime, which made it more or less part of the Canadian Maritimes, although the RCMP officers stationed in Bangor and Portland wore local uniforms out of courtesy and diplomacy.

Another exception to the destruction was Washington, D.C.; the Americans had stubbornly held on to their ancient capital and maintained the Green Zone established by Hunter Wallace. The effective government of what remained of the United States, basically all the government departments that actually did anything and therefore needed to be maintained, had been transferred recently to Burlington. But the anachronism of Congress and a shadow government still existed in D.C., and each incoming President was required by law to spend at least one night in the White House every year. (In the residence; the West Wing had never been completely repaired after Vince Cardinale and Duke had dropped mortar bombs on it. The roof was still open in places, so there was a lot of water and snow damage every year.) Private automobiles had been banned from the streets of the District to "save the environment," although it was actually due to the difficulty of obtaining fuel. So each day bureaucrats rode trolley cars and bicycles in to their offices, held long meetings where nothing was ever decided, and pounded on computer keyboards as if anything they did really mattered outside the few scattered enclaves that still maintained a

tenuous allegiance to the old régime. In the crumbling Capitol a few ageing congressmen and senators still sat in their dusty seats, met in committee, deliberated and made speeches to the empty galleries, like ghosts about to vanish at cockcrow.

America was finally dying, not in blood and fire, but slowly drifting away into the fog of institutional Alzheimer's.

In the meantime, the huge expanse of the American countryside, largely emptied of its non-white population, was slowly beginning to heal, now that the federal monkey was finally more or less off the backs of what white people remained. Ironically, most government in the stable white areas of the country was now state and local, which was exactly what the framers of the Constitution had originally stipulated; the ghost of Abraham Lincoln and the all-powerful tyranny in Washington, D.C., had finally been laid to rest, although at a shattering cost. That suited the Northwesters fine, especially the ones who were responsible for the border sectors. At least the Montana and Canadian borders were white and quiet. Aztlan was a different story.

* * *

When the Republic consolidated the entire 400-mile Montana border with the U.S.A. into a single military and civilian administrative unit, the NAR built a new firehouse and loaded up the station's three professionals from the national fire prevention service and the local volunteer fire company who made up the rest of the crew with all the equipment they'd never been able to afford under the Americans. It seemed a good trade for their crumbling old firehouse. The Republic extended the rear of the firehouse, burrowing into the side of a small hill; a good two thirds of the local Civil Guard post was now buried underground, a helpful thing in the event of shelling or some kind of aerial attack, although the Americans could no longer maintain much in the way of their once-mighty fleet of drones and Cruise missiles.

Bobby Campbell and Corporal Mike Sweeney stepped out the front door of the station and walked three doors down the street to a large, pre-fabricated hangar-like structure. Inside were parked a number of levitational vehicles, including three from the men who were waiting

for the incoming load from the U.S.—the revenue officer's government car, a small enclosed pickup truck for the Health Service rep, and a large panel truck from the Nordstroms department store chain, or rather the department store chain of that name that still did business in the NAR under local ownership and management, despite four decades of horrified screaming from the Jewish corporate interests who had made the mistake of buying up the chain and the name just before the War of Independence broke out. The Selkirks' own flyers were also parked in the hangar, which the boys had left before departing on their run.

The United States still had not been able to put together levitating transport on any serious scale, outside a few experimental lanes in the New England Union, which were used only by the super-rich who could afford the incredibly expensive Chinese-made flying cars which were the only ones sold in the remaining United States. The Selkirks had gone on their trip east driving American ground cars, with a selection of license plates from East Montana, North Dakota, and Minnesota; in the Republic, vehicles didn't have license plates or any brackets to mount them on, so runners always had to use American gasoline or diesel vehicles to get in and out of the United States. Now Bobby Campbell heard the rumble of those gasoline engines coming down the street toward him. The Americans had some alcohol and methane and even a few electric ground cars, but they still had never quite managed to break away from petroleum completely. The multinational energy corporations still had too much of a stranglehold on the Western world for that.

Corporal Sweeney slapped a large blue button and the hangar door began to rumble upwards. In a few moments a low, sleek sports car pulled in, followed by a large panel truck. The door to the sports car flipped up and a slim, good-looking young man with light brown hair clambered out. "Hey, Johnny," called Sweeney with a wave. John Selkirk's older brother, Hatcher Selkirk, climbed down from the cab of the truck. "Hey, Hatch," added Sweeney.

Johnny Selkirk was twenty years old, just out of the army, clean-shaven and lean and devilishly handsome. He was wearing a plaid shirt, a cowboy hat, and denim jeans along with durable boots Bobby recognized as custom-made streetfighter's footwear of the kind often

worn by WPB operatives; they were light enough to wind-sprint in, tough enough to walk through acid, and had light but hard steel toes and heel insets in case somebody needed kicking. Hatcher was some years older, bearded, married with two children and another on the way. He was attired in simple and nondescript coveralls that would not attract notice on either side of the line. Bobby understood that Hatch was in the process of building his family their own home on land the boys' rancher father had deeded to him and his wife, and his cut of this smuggling run would take care of all the supplies and materials he needed to do the electrical wiring and the plumbing and pave a quarter-mile driveway up to the house. No one seemed to know where John's money went, but it went somewhere, and he would probably try another smuggling run in a few months.

"Afternoon, boys," said Bobby. He stepped forward to shake their hands. "Welcome Home. I figured it was time we met. I'm Robert Campbell, the new Guard lieutenant over at the station."

"Yeah, we heard you were coming to Basin for a spell," said Johnny with a friendly grin and a strong grip. Bobby knew perfectly well that was bulldust. What they'd heard was that the cop who was married to the Daughter of the Nation was coming, but he was used to it and had long since accepted that part of the price of having Ally in his life was to be known unofficially as Mr. Allura Myers.

"Yeah, we heard," said Hatch, also shaking Bobby's hand. "Uh, your wife here with you?"

Bobby chuckled ruefully. "Yeah, the whole family came along. Ally took some leave from her job at UM; she could have done a long commute every morning and evening, but we thought it would be good for the kids to see some more of the Homeland besides Daly Avenue and the University, while they're young. A tour of duty in cattle country looks like just the thing. We want them to learn to ride and do ranch and farm work while we're out here, get closer to the land and all. White kids shouldn't grow up only in the city, if it can be helped."

"Lotta land out here to get close to," agreed Hatcher Selkirk.

"Allura's going to be teaching history at Cataract High School this year," Bobby continued. "She wanted to do primary school because she loves small children, but that would mean that she'd have two of

our three in the same school where she was a teacher. It might confuse Cathy, our little girl who's seven, and our twelve-year-old son Clancy made it clear he would find it excruciatingly embarrassing to have his mom watching over him in school, so she approached the high school and they gave her a temporary certificate. It's not just the Daughter of the Nation thing. Allura's got a doctorate in archaeology, even though nobody else in the world will recognize it. She was project manager for the Lost Creek site for a couple of years, so she can tell her students all about North American prehistory, and she knows every other aspect of our people's past inside-out."

"There he is!" called out a voice. The three out-of-town visitors had heard the American engines approaching and they had ambled over to the hangar from the local diner. They were all middle-aged men, wearing Northwest city togs that looked a little out of place in rural Montana, but which would have marked them as oddball anachronisms anywhere in the United States, East Canada, or Europe. After a great deal of discussion and debate, some public on the floor of Parliament and a good deal of it in private conferences within the Ministry of Culture, Northwest sartorial fashion had by now come to rest somewhere in the Edwardian era. All three men wore three-piece suits with sack coats (the Nordstroms buyer carried his coat over his shoulder due to the heat), waistcoats, cuffed trousers, pocket watches with chains, patent leather shoes, and wing-collar shirts with loosened ties and cravats. The Nordstroms buyer wore a straw boater hat, the Health Service driver a gray felt Homburg, and the Revenue Commissioner a black bowler.

"Excuse us, Lieutenant," said John Selkirk. "We need to settle up with these gents. Could you stick around for a bit?"

"Sure," said Bobby.

It took about fifteen minutes for the National Health Service man to load several cases of badly needed medicines and serums into the back of his van, along with several more large boxes, spare parts for various medical machinery and equipment needed in hospitals around the Northwest. He left first; some of those hospitals along his route needed the medicines and spare parts quite urgently. Every year the NAR manufactured more and more of its own hi-tech medical gear and pharmaceuticals, but there were always little bits and pieces that had

to be imported and slipped past the sanctions, which were technically still in force even if they were mostly a dead letter in the real world. The Selkirks had picked up this load from a WPB subcontractor in St Paul, an asset who specialized in acquiring and expediting healthcare contraband. The Health Service courier did not offer the Selkirk brothers any money, nor did they ask for any. There was an unwritten code among blockade runners that medical freight for white children always rode free.

Then came the examination and checking-off of a wide list of items from Gucci loafers and handbags to several crates of fine cognac and champagne to small items of jewelry, Swiss watches, and several cases of rolled Havana cigars. Johnny Selkirk pulled a box of 50 out of one case and handed it to Bobby. "You take bribes, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"If he doesn't, I do," said Corporal Sweeney. Bobby chuckled and tossed him the box. It wasn't actually a bribe, since none of this was illegal, although technically Guards weren't supposed to accept gifts of any kind, for anything. The NCG had slightly more success in suppressing this practice than other cop-shops around the world, but not much more. Actually, absent Jews, real bribes in the Northwest Republic to either police or politicians were almost unheard-of. There wasn't that much spare wealth to squabble over and misappropriate, and with taxes so low the frugal government's accountants and bookkeepers kept track of every dime from the time it went into the Treasury until the time it was spent and returned to the economy. It was not only less dangerous but simply *easier* to be honest. There was, however, a kind of tradition that a runner coming in from a successful venture shared a little of the loot with the local Guards, almost as a last vestige of times past, when real and poisonous corruption had pervaded every aspect of American life from top to bottom. Bobby had already picked up on the fact that such gratuities were expected to be shared among the Guardsmen at the station, and declining to honor the custom was not calculated to improve his standing among the men.

"Just don't tell my dad if he comes around on a surprise inspection tour," said Bobby. "He's old-school. As far as he's concerned a Guard doesn't so much as take a sandwich or an apple from a civilian."

"We won't," Sweeney assured him, and meant it. Just as Allura's story was known to the entire Republic, so was Robert Campbell Junior's. Operation Belladonna was a legend now, and no one wanted to cross a legend. It was yet another thing that made Bobby Three more determined to prove himself and come up to his father's mark, but on his own merits.

Once all the goods from Nordstroms were loaded into the department store's van, the buyer pulled out his checkbook and wrote three checks. The first, after some haggling, was given to the Revenue Commissioners' man to pay for the import taxes on the luxury goods the boys had brought into the country. The second and third were written to John and Hatcher Selkirk respectively, an even split of the remaining amount due for the merchandise. "Old man Ray Selkirk's idea," Corporal Sweeney told Bobby *sotto voce*. "The grandfather. Saves them from arguing over the split."

After the Nordstroms vehicle and the tax man had departed, the Selkirks walked over to Bobby. "Okay, we're all yours," said Johnny cheerfully. "You want anything in writing?"

"No, I imagine you've done this often enough to know what we want," Bobby told him. "Kill anybody? Anything happen that might have repercussions later on down the road? Anything you saw over there that might be of interest to BOSS or CMI or the Political Bureau? You know the drill. Plus in my case I'd just like to know if you felt anything in the general vibe. I don't know how the hell those people exist Out There. First off, any encounters with the American authorities, such as they are?"

"Nope, this one was a milk run, except a couple of cops pulled us over outside St. Paul," John said.

"St. Paul cops? Tony Solano's crew?" asked Bobby. "I thought they were all paid off? The intel briefing I got said so, anyway."

"Yeah," said Hatcher Selkirk. "Tony has the St. Paul cops and they're squared, and the Circus squared Tony. His police ignore our interstate commerce and Tony gets to keep on breathing."

"Plus these days they have to spend all their time holding down the lid on the new Minneapolis DUZ," put in John. "The Minnesota governor is screaming like a scalded dog to Burlington, by the way.

Wants them to send some mercenaries to seal off Minnie completely. That's no secret, it was on all the screens. It's pretty bad. The wall's not finished, they ran out of budget money and too many workers were getting killed and wounded trying to get the fences up. Niggers get out every night and attack white neighborhoods and shopping areas. There's some Somali warlord who's taken over the downtown area, he's fighting off the Vietnamese and the American homeboys, and he's promised to pay his top gunmen in white female slaves. No, we never have any problems from the St. Paul blues. This was Minnesota State Patrol. They actually stopped Hatch, wanted to see what was in the truck."

"What happened?"

"I saw Hatch get pulled over so I swung around, got as close as I could, and snuck back with my gun out, but they were just talking," Johnny told him. "Turned out it was a couple of rookie kids from the north woods who had been pulled down to help with the mess in Minneapolis. They didn't care what we were taking out of the state, just wanted to make sure we weren't bringing in anything to Kamal Mohammed in Minneapolis. The state government is backing an American monkoid named Trayvon Jones or something over Kamal for Head Nigger In Charge, once the DUZ gets formally recognized, and they're trying to cut off the Somalis' supply lines, hence the increase in over-the-wall raids. Anyway, these two guys are about ready to say to hell with Minnesota and Come Home."

"They'll have to do army training, but after that they could probably get into the Guards," said Bobby. "Anything else?"

"We stopped at Jerry Loudermilk's place this morning for a final gas-up and some breakfast," said John. "Something's going on over in Boulder. Emergency combined meeting of the county commissioners and the city council. Don't know what, but you know this county. Whatever happens on one side of the Road in the morning, everybody on the other side knows about it by sundown."

"Okay, well, if that's all, I guess that's all," said Bobby. "Let me know when you're going out again, boys, and thanks for the cigars."

"Will do," said Selkirk.

"I'm calling Mom and Patsy to let them know we got back okay, then I'm going to the bank and deposit this," said Hatcher, lifting his

check from Nordstroms. "Let me guess, you're going to the Emerald House to get hammered? That's fine, just give Mike your keys and you have Linda call me when you're on the floor so you don't try flying a car when you're drunk."

"No, I'll go cash my check as well, then I got some business to take care of," said John with a smile. "Don't worry, sober business."

"That's what I'm afraid of," said Hatch, unsmiling. "Sure you don't want to get hammered? I think the Emerald House is a better option all around."

"Don't worry about it!" snapped John.

"Let me ask you something, Lieutenant," said Hatcher Selkirk with a scowl, turning to Bobby. "What happens if and when my idiot brother here gets himself killed Over The Road some day, or night, because he's doing something stupid? What's the Guard's position on that?"

"If it happens Over The Road, we don't have a position," Bobby replied. "Officially, anyway. Not our jurisdiction, not our country. Unofficially, what are you talking about?" He looked at Johnny Selkirk. "Something going on I need to know about, John?"

"Nope," said Johnny. "Not a damned thing." He turned and walked away.

"Danny Tolliver?" Sweeney asked Hatcher, arching his eyebrows. "He still on that kick?"

"So it would appear," replied Hatcher.

"Danny Tolliver?" asked Bobby. "Don't recognize the name. Who's he?"

"She," said Sweeney. "Danielle's her name. Stunning young lady from Over The Road, sweet sixteen and stacked like a seam of grapes. Johnny has been sneaking Across The Road for a good six months now."

"Not illegal," commented Bobby. "At least not on our end. Technically speaking, under their law none of us is supposed to be Over The Road at all, but nobody pays any attention to that fact any more."

"It may not be illegal, but it's stupid and dangerous," growled Hatcher in frustration. "If Elwood Tolliver catches John Selkirk with his granddaughter, it doesn't matter whether they're doing the wild thing

or just sitting there reading Bible verses, he's going to shoot, and either John kills him or old man Tolliver kills John. If John dies then I and my brothers, and my father and my grandfather are going Over The Road. You could call for some backup from Butte and maybe stop us for a while, but not forever. You understand, that's not a threat, Lieutenant. God knows I don't want anything like that to happen. None of us do. We've all talked at John until we're blue in the damned face, and he just won't listen. I'm just telling you how it is. If any harm comes to John Over There, then we know there won't ever be any justice from the Americans, so we're just gonna have to take it for ourselves."

"Jesus, this sounds like some kind of blood feud!" commented Bobby.

"Pretty much," said Sweeney with a nod. "Goes back to the war. The first war, forty years ago. The Selkirks were Nationalist and the Tollivers were Union. Ray Selkirk was a Volunteer and Elwood Tolliver was a Patty."

"A Fattie?" asked Campbell, surprised. "And he dares to live this close to the border? Why hasn't the Circus cut his throat?"

"No, a Patty," explained Sweeney. "Kind of local slang for Police Anti-Terrorist Unit. Militarized police the Americans used as auxiliaries. Beginning back in the 1990s, the Americans loaded local police and sheriff's departments up with everything from body armor to armored cars to heavy weapons like .50-caliber machine guns, brought in military personnel to train them, created SWAT teams and all kinds of special units that were supposed to be a new law enforcement élite, trained them in fire and maneuver and counter-insurgency, so forth and so on. Plus ideological indoctrination from the Southern Poverty Law Center in how to recognize evil racist white male Enemies of the People. After a while folks noticed that these militarized cop teams and units were being set up not just in big cities where there was certainly justification for it, but in remote areas of the country that were majority white. Especially there. Montana got a lot of those. Elwood was a Jefferson County sheriff's deputy and he was offered an extra two hundred dollars a week and better medical insurance for his family if he'd join the PATU, which is what these special teams were called in this part of Montana."

"Does Sheriff Lomax know about all this?" asked Bobby.

"He does," confirmed Sweeney. "He says the same thing you and Hatch say now. Number one, it's not unlawful and there's nothing he can do unless somebody files a complaint, and number two, has Johnny lost his frigging mind?"

"I know the first war was really bad here in Montana," said Bobby soberly. "In a way almost as bad as the second war, which was also largely fought here. At least the second war was over in seven weeks. It was conventional, and the lines were clear. Us against them, good against evil, no gray area, no moral ambiguity. The first one lasted five years, and it consisted mostly of a long string of individual homicides that just never seemed to stop, killing after killing and horror story after horror story that after a while poisoned the very air. My Aunt Jenny, Mrs. Stockdale the retired university Chancellor's wife, she was a Volunteer, and so was Jason. She and Jason Stockdale were two of the few survivors of the Helena Raid, when Jack Smith of the Regulators was killed. They never talked about it much."

"Most people around here don't any more, either," said Hatcher. "Talk about it, I mean. I'm almost thirty, and I think I can count on my fingers the number of times my grandfather has even mentioned the Volunteers or the War of Independence. But he wears his roundel with the ribbon any time he dresses in a jacket. I think I was about ten years old before I got curious and asked him what it was. But some people have a lot more reason not to remember than others."

"Elwood Tolliver and Ray Selkirk being two of those?" asked Bobby,

"Yep," said Sweeney. "Elwood Tolliver was wounded during an NVA contact in the fourth year. Not just wounded. He was deliberately kneecapped, a punishment shooting. Crippled for life. He was given an artificial knee which worked for a while, but then the U.S.A. fell apart and so did Elwood's artificial knee, and he can't get a replacement that works. So he just had some Hindu butcher at a clinic stick a pin in it to keep it straight. He can't move the knee at all now and he can barely walk, even with a cane."

"Great Caesar's ghost! The National Health could give him an artificial knee that would have him dancing a Highland fling in no

time!" exclaimed Bobby. "You know they'll take any white man or woman, from anywhere. This guy lives within ten miles of a clinic that can heal him for good, and he does nothing?"

"Elwood would literally die rather than take anything from this Republic or any man in it," said Hatcher flatly. "He almost did once, when he had double pneumonia and the hospital in Boulder wouldn't help him because the Americans had run out of money and stopped the medical insurance for veterans."

"Well, okay," conceded Bobby. "So the guy's a bitter-ender. I can see why he wouldn't be too pleased to have the grandson of a Northwest Volunteer squiring his granddaughter around."

"It's worse than that," said Hatcher. "My grandfather, Ray Selkirk, was the Northwest Volunteer who blew off Elwood Tolliver's kneecap."

XXXI

The American Side

(40 Years, ten months, and one day after Longview)

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
—Proverbs 16:18

About the same time Johnny Selkirk was slipping back Across The Road in his private ground car to see if he could find Danielle Tolliver and sneak in a few hours of forbidden love, Jefferson County Sheriff Ben Lomax and the mayor of American Boulder, Jay Gavin, were holding an impromptu get-together in the clerk's office in the Boulder Town Hall. Several other local political types were gathered around the clerk's desk, sitting in chairs borrowed from elsewhere or else on other functionaries' desks. In the bad old days when Hunter Wallace and One Nation Indivisible ruled the land, they would have held such unofficial conclaves outside the building altogether, preferably out on the open prairie somewhere, for fear of electronic eavesdropping.

Americans on the whole weren't afraid of bugs any more—the federal government outside the New England Union and Washington, D.C., areas no longer had the capability in money, personnel, or expertise for extensive electronic monitoring, and no one remembered how to work the surveillance drones any more. Some of the remaining American local governments had miniature Surveillance States in operation these days and some didn't, and it had to be admitted that Montana under its current Republican coalition of native-born cattlemen, rural and small-towners, and Christian evangelicals was pretty good about not spying on its citizens. The old outside-backed, liberal Democrat coalition of eco-freaks, media, and Judaeo-liberals had been crippled by the

Longview treaty forty years before, as well as the subsequent loss of most of the state's large urban areas where liberals and non-whites under the United States régime always congregated their assets and their numbers in order to outspend and outvote the white countryside. There were still some ageing liberals left in East Montana, operating in the state legislature as the Green Party, since good leftists didn't use the name Democrat any more. The corruption, perversion and murder of the two elder Clintons had never shaken the faith of good lefty-libs one jot, holding firm through three impeachments and endless wars and catastrophes. But Longview had burst like a bomb on the world Left and shaken its faith to the core, while Chelsea Clinton's surrender to the racist forces of darkness had damned the Democratic Party forever in the eyes of the world's Judaeo-liberal élite. It had disbanded unmourned shortly afterward and its political elements had melded into the Greens or One Nation Indivisible.

However, the absence of all-powerful central government spying on Montana citizens did not remove the fear of plain, old-fashioned informers. The state police and the politicians in Billings were notorious for maintaining eyes and ears throughout the remainder of the state, especially along the border. To be sure, sometimes these networks of unofficial state operatives were put to ambiguous uses. Like all democratic (small d) politicians, the East Montana state legislature and state government contained a good many men who liked to play both ends against the middle. In addition, the random citizen in the border counties who picked up the odd backhander in New American dollars from Billings in exchange for information also occasionally received similar baksheesh in Northwest credits from BOSS and the War Prevention Department, sometimes for the same piece of intelligence. The city fathers of Boulder wanted to make sure that the discussion at this particular meeting didn't end up either in Billings or Missoula, hence the closed door and the select attendee list. Besides Sheriff Lomax and Mayor Gavin there were the town treasurer, Roland Hoy, Councilman Shep Akins, and the chairman of the Board of Commissioners, Monty Sanderson, who was also the biggest rancher in the county. Sanderson was a tall and weather-beaten man of about 60, wearing a plaid shirt and

a battered Stetson, who looked like he played a cowboy in the movies but who in fact really was one. He even chewed tobacco.

These men constituted a kind of unofficial subcommittee of local government in Boulder, a kitchen council. They were united by two common motivations. The first was a genuine and urgent desire to keep Jefferson County a functioning, stable and decent place to live, free of cross-border violence and turmoil. They knew they were sparrows nesting in a rain gutter who could be washed away by the flood at the slightest lapse of attention, and that in order to survive the community had to stay on the good side of both the régime in Billings and their bellicose neighbors Over The Road. The second unifying factor was a visceral loathing for East Montana governor Walter Wellman, his scurvy thieving crew of suits up in Billings, and all their works. Monty Sanderson spoke for them all when he once declared from the floor of a council meeting, "I wouldn't piss on Walt Wellman if his heart was on fire!" The fact that Wellman had handily defeated Sanderson in a primary election some years before was a contributing factor to this attitude.

Now Sanderson was saying, "Jay, we've got to stop this! We *cannot* allow that son-of-a-bitch in Billings to re-militarize the border on some excuse about protecting the development of this wonderful new economy we're supposed to be getting out of the goodness of east coast hearts! We've had twenty-eight years of peace with that bunch Over The Road—well, more or less peace—and now Wally Wellman wants to start poking them with a stick to see what happens! Well, I think we *know* what will happen when we start bringing in not just soldiers but hippie-dippies and non-whites and maybe even Jewish people, for God's sake! We know damned well how those lunatics are gonna react! I always figured the days of having goddamned so-called *diversity* jammed down our throats by central government were long gone!"

"They're not jamming it down our throats, Monty," replied Gavin. "They're making us an offer that could make life better for everybody in the county, at least in the short term, and they're asking for our permission to set up the Prosperity Zone in the form of a vote of the council and the commissioners or a referendum from the voters. That's the way they *should* be going about a major change like this. They're

playing by the rules. But yeah, I agree, those people Over The Road will probably take exception, and we need to be concerned with that."

"They're like rattlesnakes," commented Shep Akins, shaking his head gloomily. "You leave them alone, they'll leave you alone, but you'd damned well better *leave* 'em alone! They are going to view this as Montana deliberately picking a fight with them, is what, and our border here is gonna end up being as bad and as bloody as their southern border with the Aztecs." Out of two generations of habit, none of the men ever used the words "Northwest Republic" or "East Montana." There was only one state of Montana. That whatever-it-was Across The Road was an elephant in the parlor that no one ever spoke of if it could be helped, some kind of freak weather condition that would one day dissipate by itself and everything would be back to normal. Whatever normal was.

No one remembered any more. For much of the remaining functional America, "normal" was fragments of the electronically preserved past, mostly entertainment people remembered from childhood, bits and pieces of MTV and adult cartoons that some elderly people remembered from the 1990s, or later pornography and propaganda. In Montana there was a vague feeling that normal somehow resembled those old situation comedies from a hundred years before that many people now kept on their computers and stored in their home entertainment screens, since they had become legal again, or at least since the police had stopped confiscating them and fining people for "non-diverse recreational viewing." (Yes, that had been a criminal offense at one time.) The shows from the 1950s and 60s where everybody was white, where families consisted of a married man and woman who had white children, and lived in a nice house, and never had family meetings to discuss fellatio. It was a powerful but archaic collective cultural memory of the old America, which was now a nearly mythological past Golden Age that white people sensed rather than knew much about. It was a legend that whites had somehow acquired and retained from before "all that, you know, *stuff*" began at some vague time in the later 20th Century. Northwesters called this period the Dark Time, but to the rest of white America it was known as the Time of Abundance, a simpler and happier period, a dim memory that was more felt than consciously

thought about. There was a sense that once there had been a wonderful Camelot where all the faces were white, something that was almost extinct now everywhere in the world except in a few parts of North America like East Montana which was a little too close to that—that *whatever it was* in the Northwest corner of the map that was never labeled, not even in school textbooks. There was no law against black or brown or Jewish or homosexual people living in East Montana, not at all, but they just didn't feel comfortable there. The winters were too cold, the landscape in the eastern part of the state was too bleak, and Nemesis was too near.

"What do you suggest we do about it, Monty?" asked Mayor Gavin. "And what makes you think most folks in the western counties *want* anything done about it? Have you grasped the implications of this Prosperity Zone thing they're talking about? We're talking tens of thousands of new residents for this part of the state over the next few years, thousands of new high-paying jobs. All those new people will need housing and need someplace to spend those big salaries, so we're looking at a boom that can pull those of us who live here off welfare and actually give us a pot to piss in again! This is a rising tide that really will lift all our boats."

"Yeah, I get it, but I don't understand it," said Sanderson. "Why the hell do the state and the ERA, or whatever that outfit in Burlington is, suddenly want to come all the way out *here* of all places, right on the very edge of the dragon's den, and start throwing money at *us* for? Why exactly do they suddenly want to build factories and research labs and give us all these fancy development loans for our ranches and farms so we can double our production? Yeah, I heard what they said about the need for the U.S.A. to increase food production because all the poor colored folk in the cities are starving and if we can't feed 'em they might break out of their pens and go marauding. Hell, American white people have been buying off those black sons of bitches to stop 'em from rioting for a century now. But there's still farms in the rest of the country, or what's left of the country after we gave the Southwest to the Mexicans and the Northwest to homicidal maniacs. Why here? Why not Wisconsin, or downstate Illinois, or Kansas?"

"Not to mention they're offering guaranteed buyers for every steer and every bushel of wheat and every gallon of milk, price-supported so we don't have to worry about hard times," put in Roland Hoy. "And now that Montana beef will no longer officially be a sin, we can even go back to cattle ranching if we want! It's like a farmer's dream come true! No government state or federal has supported agricultural prices for almost sixty years now! There just hasn't been the money for it. It's something our grandfathers knew! The way that character from Billings and the one from the ERA was talking, we're headed for Wonderland, and there are a lot of folks in this country who will be buying into it and who won't take kindly to us raining on the parade."

"If something looks too good to be true, it probably is," said Sanderson. "Yeah, I heard what they said, but I never did quite catch the part explaining why they want to create this so-called Prosperity Zone *here,* of all places on earth, where we've got thousands of heavily-armed bandits sitting not ten and twenty miles away from it all," he went on, growling like a dog with a bone he refused to release. "That's like dangling raw meat in front of a starving coyote! These people aren't fools, they have to know what will happen once they start changing things around on this side of the Road and importing people that bunch Across The Road considers to be their mortal enemies! No wonder they're talking about bringing in New Model Army bases as well! They'll damned well need 'em, to protect those new residents and the fancy homes and businesses we'll be building for them!"

"Exactly," said Sheriff Lomax calmly. He was a nondescript-looking man of average height and brown hair, wearing a khaki uniform with a sheriff's star pinned on it. He had one eccentricity: on his hip he carried as a sidearm not a standard plastic police automatic, but an ivory-handled Colt .45 Peacemaker. He had been sheriff for ten years, and during that time he had used the weapon three times when all else had failed, with results that had earned him respect on both sides of the border.

Now Lomax paused to light his pipe. When the iron heel of One Nation Indivisible had been yanked off people's necks, the American tobacco ban had become a dead letter in any part of the country that declined to play any more, along with so much else. Montana decided

to let people smoke, and a long series of near-hysterical decrees and orders from D.C. and later from Burlington had simply been tossed in the wastebasket. With the bones and burned-out vehicles of the 101st Airborne and the U.S. Marines rusting and blowing away in the Northwest wind after the Seven Weeks, the United States had no more muscle to back up its authority. The result was that rather than shouting orders, the remains of the old régime had grown much more subtle and diplomatic, governing necessarily by consensus with whatever carrot they could muster and almost no stick, almost like the pre-1861 federal governments had done. Anti-tobacco laws had figuratively gone up in smoke.

"I agree, they're trying to start something," Lomax went on. "Monty's right. The Economic Recovery Administration is not bringing all this new industry and commerce right up to the edge of a volatile Western frontier just out of the goodness of their hearts, and certainly not just for profit. If profit was all they wanted they'd keep it close. They'd put all these new projects in the Berkshires or the Boston suburbs where they can regiment the labor force and control production. They're deliberately constructing an attractive nuisance for our friends Over The Road in order to justify the subsequent need to protect it. They're building a coop full of nice fat chickens that they know damned well will draw foxes, in order to have an excuse to put up a fence around the coop and break out the farmer's shotgun. To add insult to injury they're making sure some of the chickens will be black and brown and maybe have big noses. They're deliberately creating a demand for goods and services and highly skilled labor in this area that they know we can't supply locally, and which can only be filled these days from certain places that are still stable and functional enough to produce skilled workers. Like the remaining eastern universities, like East Canada, and certain parts of what's left of Europe, the last breeding grounds of the old Political Correctness. They've targeted the Montana border counties, ours among them, for a deliberate political and demographic change of the kind they used to carry out all the time back in the old days before the Trouble broke out and reversed the process, at least here in the Northwest. They're planning to turn Boulder and some other places along our side of the Road into what our granddaddies used to

call latté towns. Old-timey term that, not even sure what it means, seems to me it was something to do with coffee, but basically these towns were left-wing liberal hippie-dippie colonies deliberately created in the middle of a lot of normal people, to buy them off and skew the electoral map, to break up white voting blocs and sometimes even turn red districts blue."

"Red, blue, what are you talking about?" asked Shep Akins.

"Oh, I remember that shit," said Monty Sanderson. "Just some TV crap from when I was a kid, back when we are all one country and we used to have these big elections with all fifty of the old states. Before your time, I think, Shep. Never mind. Go on, Ben."

Lomax nodded. "Burlington knows damned well that once money and people of a certain social and ideological persuasion start coming in here, they are going to start poking and throwing sticks at the border like dummy kids teasing a big mean chained-up dog, only our dog Over The Road ain't tied up very secure at all. There will be first one incident, then two, then four, and before long they will have all the excuse they need to bring back the McCurtain and start putting up all the wire and laying the minefields again. Plus a lot of black and brown thugs in body armor who will take over the town, push us aside, and start bullying and raping girls and lording it over us like they used to in President Wallace's time."

"The first obvious thing I would be worried about is the fact that bringing in soldiers would be a violation of the Armistice," said Gavin. "I know that technically the NMA are not United States military, they're private security contractors, which is an interesting legal hair-split, but our friends Across The Road aren't going to buy it for a second. All of a sudden the American government will have armed men sitting on this side, and that means Those Guys are going to start moving all their own heavies right up to the Road, and all that new prosperity of ours is going to be sitting in the middle of a potential war zone that might explode at any moment when some kid on one side of the Road decides to take a pot-shot at some other kid on the other side flipping him the bird or something. Lord help us, they might actually invade again and start another war! And maybe this time Jefferson County won't come off so well."

"That may be the intention," remarked Lomax dryly.

"Jesus, Ben, *why?"* asked Shep Akins in horror. "Why the hell would Burlington do a damned fool thing like that? If we couldn't beat them twenty-eight years ago with the United States military at its full power, how can a handful of rent-a-cops do it now?

"I got no idea, Shep," said Lomax, shaking his head with a frown, puffing on his pipe. "I get the feeling that this whole thing is part of some bigger game they're playing. My guess would be that the Ottawa crowd is involved. East Canada might as well change its name to New Israel and be done with it. Who knows what goes on in the minds of these people? They just don't think like us. If I had to guess, I reckon Burlington has decided it's time to start re-colonizing as much of the Northwest as they can with liberals and re-establishing control over the land and the people here. Could be we've got another Hunter Wallace working his way up the ladder back there on Lake Champlain, and maybe he's getting his ducks in a row ready for another war a few years down the pike. With us in the line of fire!"

Roland Hoy spoke up stubbornly. "Ben, I still say most of the folks around here won't see it that way. You may be a little too young to remember how it was before the war, when everybody in Jefferson County who didn't farm or ranch pretty much worked for the government in one way or another."

"No, I'm not old enough to remember, but I know a lot of people who do," said Ben Lomax sharply. "My dad worked in the Developmental Center with the dummies, teaching them how to make baskets and not drool all over themselves or cut their fingers off with their leather-working tools. My mama was a guard at the young bitches' prison, where she got her face slashed by a teenaged mami with a nail she'd pulled out of the wall. I saw that scar on her face every day of my life until she passed! My uncle was a so-called counselor at the tough love camp. He used to counsel those spoiled brats with a blackjack upside the head, which I gather is pretty much why all those rich parents back east paid so much money to send their little darlings there, because they didn't have the balls to knock some sense into those drugged-up trashed-out punks' heads themselves. That's the kind of government work America gave Jefferson County, Montana, Rolly. They used us

as a human garbage dump and paid us a pittance to keep the garbage locked in the dumpster out here in the piney woods. We may be poor now, and a lot of us may be on state welfare in the winter, but I swear to God, I think we've got more pride and our consciences can rest a lot easier now we're not doing the dirty work for rich people who consider us lower than the shit they scrape off their Gucci shoes!"

Mayor Jay Gavin laughed out loud. "Ben, you know, back in the day, if you'd made a little speech like that and an ONI microphone had picked it up, you'd be headed for your own jail right about now."

"Now *that* I am old enough to remember," replied Lomax, unsmiling. "And I am damned if I want those days to come again. If we take these people's money and their jobs and rent them homes when they come, and build them more homes so more of them can come, then they start voting Green. We get a new council and new commissioners, and all of a sudden we're no longer in charge of our own community. And once the yuppies and the New Model mercenaries come, how long before the microphones are in place and men of our skin color are getting hauled away to prison for uttering a forbidden word? Remember, technically speaking we're still part of the United States of America, and all those goddamned hatecrime and hatespeech laws are still on the books, somewhere."

"You sure you're on the right side of the Road, Ben?" chortled Roland Hoy. Then he suddenly stopped, and the others fell silent. Another unwritten law in Jefferson County, Montana, was that one never, *ever* spoke lightly or facetiously on the subject of concealed or divided loyalties. There were too many skeletons in too many closets from the Trouble to do so safely. Forty years ago men and women had died, and families had been ripped apart for all time over such things, and the scar tissue over the deep and terrible wound was thin.

Ben gave him a wintry smile. "I'm forty-five years old, Rolly, lived here all my life. I could have taken a walk up Second Avenue and stayed there any time in all those years. Haven't done it yet."

"I'm still not convinced the state and the ERA aren't on the level," said Shep Akins, shaking his head in a quick change of subject. "What they said made sense. This actually would be a pretty good place to build a research and manufacturing super-park, from a purely business point

of view. Cheap land, lots of ready and willing local labor, economic diversification away from the DUZs which is a polite way of saying they want to make sure that valuable people and resources don't get overrun and slaughtered if one or more of the cities boils over and gets out of control—why do we have to assume they have some hidden agenda to start trouble?"

"Because before we came in here I went online and looked up this Gabi Martine woman who will be arriving here as the ERA's project head in a few days," said Lomax flatly, throwing down a few sheets of paper from a file folder beside him. "Take a look. She's black as the ace of spades!"

* * *

Danielle Tolliver pulled into the yard of her family's ranch house just off Montana Highway 69 after ten o'clock that night. The sun had set, but the rolling hills and trees of the Deer Lodge National Forest still loomed visible in the twilight overhead, looking almost as if they would fall and crush the house. Danny was driving one of the family's pickup trucks that day, an ancient electric-powered vehicle that had been around for decades. The maintenance of that truck was a Tolliver family tradition handed down from father to son; no one had made parts for the thing for almost forty years, and yet it still ran. Danielle quickly lugged the charging cable out to the truck from the generator in the carport and plugged it in; she didn't want to draw even more attention to her late arrival by allowing her father or grandfather to find a dead battery the next morning. Then she grabbed her book bag containing her Bible and all her other church-related books and computer discs out of the front seat, and she bounced on into the house.

Danny was a petite but voluptuous girl dressed simply in jeans and a blue knit sleeveless top, with long cornsilk hair which tonight she wore in a single braid down her back. The dining room was empty, but a slice of apple cobbler sat on a place mat on the table, along with a fork for her. She was supposed to have eaten supper at the Young Life fellowship meeting at the Assemblies of God church, and she had in fact done so before slipping out early to meet Johnny Selkirk at one of their spots

on Hanson Creek Road. But since Danny worked outdoors on a ranch, and therefore had none of the usual American teenager's problem with incipient obesity, she could afford to be a normal sixteen-year-old who never turned down an extra dessert.

She grabbed up the plate and fork and went into the living room where her family was watching a show on the wallplate, the huge screen that filled one wall of the room and served as television, computer monitor, telephone, and general connection to the outside world. Her fourteen-year-old brother Wade was wearing the red headphones and playing a desultory video game in the lower right hand corner of the screen, while her mother Alice was watching a nature show with the blue headphones. Wade was just beginning a major growth spurt and was already taller than Danny or their mother. Her grandfather, Elwood Tolliver, a massive white-haired man of 65 with a seamed face, was sitting in an armchair by the empty fireplace, reading a newspod on his 14" X 9" clear plastic tablet, which he had downloaded from the wallplate earlier. Elwood's cane, which he needed because of his old kneecapping injury, was by the chair. Danny could see her grandfather was reading the venerable *USA Today*, which hadn't printed a paper copy in over a generation. Elwood subscribed because of all the major news sites, *USA Today* was the most rabidly anti-NAR, and still defiantly ran a silhouette of the old 50-state America on its homepage.

"Hi!" Danny said cheerily, stuffing her mouth with cobbler. "Where's Dad?"

"Not back from Bozeman yet," said her brother.

Many years before, when ONI had banned beef production on the grounds that meat was murder and bad for people's health, and that bovine flatulence was a major cause of global warming, Elwood Tolliver had switched the ranch over from beef to dairy cattle. For some reason *their* flatulence was apparently environmentally friendly and the cholesterol in their dairy products positively benign, according to politically correct science. This was largely a testament to the dexterity of the dairy industry's lobby in Washington, as well as their generosity to Hunter Wallace's campaign war chest. The Tollivers now ran almost forty head of cows, which they milked twice per day with the aid of the whole family, three herd dogs, intermittent help from local kids as

they could afford it, and two ageing agricultural robots. Danny had heard that Elwood had at one stage employed some Mexicans, but they somehow became targeted for some kind of trouble from Over The Road, and the beaners had vanished. She didn't know the story; it had happened before she was born. The milk was saved in special refrigerated and sanitized tanker trailers provided by the Montana State Dairy Board, and once a week Wendell Tolliver hitched up the tanker to his old diesel truck and drove the tanker down to Bozeman, where he dropped it off at the pasteurizing plant and picked up another to bring home.

"You better finish that and get to bed, Danny," her brother told her. "You missed evening milking for church and so you're up at four-thirty and I get to set my alarm for *six-thirty*, yeaaah! So you need to get to bed. *Now*." He was looking at his sister strangely, his mouth working like a fish. She realized Wade was silently mouthing the words "*Get outta here now!*" at her. But it was too late.

Her mother switched off the show, calmly took off her headphones, and looked at Danielle. "How was Fellowship?" she asked.

"Fine!" said Danny. "We put together kits for Bible outreach, and Reverend Newlin played the Wonder Of His Love concert on the hall's wallplate for us after supper. That's the one with the Assemblies choir and JC's Crew. It was cool."

"How could you see it from under the table?" inquired her mother.

"Huh?"

"Your phone kept going to voice mail, so I drove to the church at seven-thirty. I went into the Fellowship Hall and you were nowhere to be found, so I guess you must have been under the dining room table. Oh, and the electro truck was gone from the parking lot," said Alice Tolliver. She stared at her daughter. "Well? Do you at least have enough decency not to lie or try to involve your friends in your lies any more? I suppose I should mention that I've spoken to Sherry Applewhite's mother and to Sherry herself, so that escape route is closed."

Danny had known she couldn't keep it up for too much longer, Farm families were tight-knit, their schedules for the day generally allocated before breakfast, gaps in that timeline were hard to conceal,

and adolescent deception was generally more difficult than for city kids with only one parent who was working most of the day in someplace other than the home or on the property. Danny had a rudimentary grasp of one of the first principles of intrigue: when suspected, always try to make the evidence point to a lesser offense. Human nature being what it is, there was more chance of being believed. "Okay, Mom, fine, I cut Fellowship!" she said, feigning faux exasperation. She was about to come up with a tale of an evening of ice cream debauchery and flying around in Keith Bellinger's home-souped convertible, which had limited levitation capability, and in which Keith sometimes buzzed cattle and isolated houses, but her mother cut her off.

"I should also mention that I've spoken to Sheriff Lomax about your activities," Alice told her.

"You called the *sheriff* on me?" cried Danny, scandalized.

"No, it was he who came to see your father and me," said Alice coldly. "He called yesterday and asked if he could come out, and your dad and I sent you and Wade driving out to the south barn to pick up those two bad milking machines so we could speak in your absence. Speaking of absence, Wade, please go to your room. Your grandfather and I want to speak to your sister in private."

"About what?" demanded Wade. "About her riding around on both sides of the Road and smooching with Johnny Selkirk? If you guys didn't know until yesterday, you're the only ones in the county who didn't!"

"Meaning you knew and you didn't see fit to say anything?" said Elwood from his armchair, his eyes still on his newspod tablet. Wade wisely kept quiet.

Alice stared at him. "I'm sorry to hear that, Wade, but be that as it may, please go to your room now. I know you're family but you're not yet of an age to participate in all the family business."

Wade was about to argue, but his grandfather said "Scat!" and Wade scatted.

Alice resumed, "The sheriff was concerned that your behavior might have wider ramifications than you can possibly understand at your age, Danielle. Sheriff Lomax was certain we didn't know what you were doing, and I am sorry to say that he was correct. I was going

to wait for your father to come home so we could talk to you about this together, but after tonight . . ." Something struck her. "What did Wade mean about you riding around with that—on *both sides of the Road?*" she demanded heatedly.

"Sometimes John drives me over to Basin, yes," said Danny, amazed at how calm she sounded. "Sometimes I meet him over there and we eat in Shirley's Diner or we have a sandwich in the Four Deuces."

"Dear God in Heaven, that's Unauthorized Contact and Unauthorized Travel! You could go to prison!" Alice shouted.

"Mom, nobody cares about those stupid old laws any more!" replied Danny in irritation. "They're from before I was born, before the war, even! Half the population of Boulder goes Across The Road to buy meat and booze and cigarettes and grass that's not taxed through the roof! You know that. It's been like that for years. Nobody cares if I want to go to Basin! It's only six miles away, not the far side of the moon!"

"*I* most certainly care!" Alice shouted, taken aback by her daughter's open admission. "You're too young to be in a saloon, especially a saloon over *there*!"

"I don't drink beer or liquor, Mom, and neither does John when we're together! They don't just sell booze in the Four Deuces, they've got good sandwiches and salads, they have a lot of western Montana Celtic and Southern live music groups on weekends and on weeknights a lot of local musicians come in and play for drinks. And yes, I like some music besides gospel and sacred and inspirational and Country and Western," Danny added.

"It's against the law!" said Alice harshly. "You're not legally allowed to set foot in anyplace that sells alcohol for another eight years, young lady!"

"Not in the Republic," Danny reminded her. "There's no legal drinking age. In the NAR it's up to whoever owns a business who he wants in his establishment. If you create a problem the Guards deal with it, but nobody tells anybody else what to do. Well, most of the time not."

"It's not a *Republic* of anything!" yelled Alice. "It's a—it's a no-man's land of crime and hate and bloodshed! It is part of the devil's own kingdom on earth!"

"It is that, Alice, but they call themselves a Republic, and until such time as this country somehow recovers its moral strength and courage and does something about that, so they will continue to do," her father-in-law said quietly from his chair, still not looking at them. "You need to be realistic, Al. This is too deadly serious to quibble over semantics."

"What else has he—Danny, what *else* are you doing?" asked her mother. She was quiet now, more intense, almost on the edge of hysteria. Danny was tempted for a moment to shout out that she was making wild, passionate love with Johnny Selkirk every chance she could get, just so she could see her mother's face, but she didn't. In the first place, it wasn't true. In the second place, she loved her mother and she couldn't be that cruel to her. In the third place, she loved her grandfather, but she had always feared him a little, and sensed that he was at least a bit mad on the subject of anything to do with the NAR or the far past, and she frankly didn't want to see what he would do if she told a lie like that out of spite. Whatever he would do, she knew it wouldn't be worth it.

"I'm not having sex or carnal relations or whatever you want to call it, Mom," Danny said with dignity. "John knows that I'm a Christian and he respects that. That's why he doesn't drink around me. Besides, if he did seduce me or anything, his own family would be just as angry with him as you guys would. It's low behavior for men as well as women Over There. I have to be honest, from what I've seen they're a lot more successful at getting men to restrain themselves in their country than we are in ours!"

"This is true," admitted old Elwood, finally looking up at them. "One way they do it is by legalized dueling, so any young man Over There who leads a young lady astray and declines to marry her afterward is likely to find himself looking down the barrel of a flintlock pistol in the hands of the girl's father or brother. Those soft lead balls can rip a man's jaw off his face at twenty paces. That's if they want to be all formal about it. If not, the irate relatives may just face the naughty boy down in the street and play fast draw, and as long as it's some semblance of a fair fight, the cops will just come along and haul away the bodies. Your favored eateries are situated in a land where murder is for all intents

and purposes legal. That doesn't bother you, Danny? No, really, I'm curious."

"John doesn't carry a gun over on his side!" expostulated Danny. "It's not necessary over there! Nobody's gonna try and shoot him over there!"

"So he carries one when he's over here?" asked Elwood. "Danny, do you also know that he's a criminal? That he and his brothers regularly smuggle contraband goods from this country into the—over onto his side of the Road?"

"Yes, I know," said Danny steadily. "He just came back from a run today. He told me all about it. He said it was mostly medicine and stuff people need to survive over there, but they can't get because of the sanctions."

"Well, he would say that, wouldn't he?" asked Elwood. Danny's mother was quietly sobbing.

"So what now, Mom?" she asked. "You and Dad gonna kick me out of the house for being sinful?"

"Don't be stupid, child," said Elwood irritably.

"I am very seriously considering sending you to complete your education at the church's school in Fargo, North Dakota," said her mother.

"You can't do that, Mom!" screamed Danielle in horror.

"I can and I very well might do that very thing! Your father and I together, of course, if it looks to be the only way of curtailing this out-of-control behavior. I don't care what kind of anarchy goes on in that annex of hell Over The Road, Danielle, here you are still a minor until you are twenty-four, and we can do whatever we feel is in your best interests. Fallbrook Academy has an excellent scholastic record and it might just be the best thing for you in any circumstances," her mother told her grimly.

"How does Wendell feel about losing a milking hand?" asked Elwood. "He's the boss now, Alice, and he is also Danny's father, but I still have a say in what goes on around the ranch, since I was the one who made and ran it until I deeded it over to him. We'd have to hire somebody, and with that and Danny's tuition and board at Fallbrook it would stretch our finances mighty thin. You know darned well this

little girl works like a cart horse around this place. We've never had any complaints about that. Hell, we've never had any complaints at all about the child until she went off on this little treason tear of late."

"Then what do you suggest we do about her, Father T?" asked Alice.

"Let me take a crack at her," suggested Elwood.

"I'm standing right here, you know!" yelled Danny.

"Then stand there and shut up!" snapped the old man. "You have lost the right to speak or think or do anything around here, young lady. You clearly have no idea at all just how *bad* this thing you're doing is, Danielle. I mean it, girl, this isn't just some sixteen-year-old wild child shit!"

"Language, please, Father Tolliver!" interrupted Alice. He ignored her.

"Okay, this may be partly my fault, for not assisting in your upbringing as I should have done. Your father and your mother are too young to remember the first time, the Trouble itself. They were just barely born. True, they're old enough so they can remember the time when the sky lit up, and the tanks rolled Across The Road, and when Boulder was full of nothing but Nazi gray and camouflage . . ."

"They're not all Nazis!" protested Danny.

Elwood stood up and nailed his granddaughter to the floor with a glance from a face of pure rage and burning eyes she had never seen before. "Did I not just tell you to shut the hell up? You're speaking of things you know not one damned thing about. I know who and what those people are. *You do not*. I was there. *You were not*. Do you read me, little girl? Now you're going to go to bed, and tomorrow you and me are going to do the morning milking together. You will make us both breakfast, and then I am going to take you for a ride, and I am going to show you things you should never have to see and I am going to speak to you of things you should never have had to hear. Like I said, this may be down to me, because I should have spoken before this. I will make this one effort to get through to you, child, and if I cannot, if you will not or cannot understand what you have done, then you can go to hell. In fact, you most assuredly will."

* * *

About seven o'clock the next morning, Danny and her grandfather were riding in one of the family pickup trucks down an old back road to the north of the family ranch. The two-lane blacktop highway was over a hundred years old and narrow, more a tired light graytop now, and the asphalt was crumbling badly. Jefferson County was constantly short of funds for road maintenance, the state of Montana was notoriously stingy, and no one could remember the last time anyone had seen a federal highway dollar. It was a glorious summer morning. The bright sun had been up for some time, but the morning was still cool from the night before. The sky was deep blue and the golden grass that rolled along the valley floor glowed, while the smell of the pine trees on the ridges and clustering hills invaded even the cab of the pickup.

Old Elwood was driving. Earlier in the morning he and Danny had only exchanged a few words during the robot-assisted milking and their early breakfast. Now the old man began to speak. "Honey, I honest to God don't know what to do about this. If I asked, I'm sure you'd either tell me you love this man, a great and immortal love for all the ages like no young girl ever experienced, like none of us would ever have heard that before, or else you'd say you're grown up and it's just plain none of my business or your parents' business who you spend your time with. That's not quite true, because at sixteen, yes, it is still our business, and I'm not just talking about the law. No, you're not grown up, you're just at that bad time in life when you think you are but you ain't, and that's how kids get in trouble more often than not. But I'm not asking about you and this Selkirk fellow, because I just plain don't want to hear it. Try to understand, Danny, this isn't about you and him, it's about you. You *can't* do this, but you don't understand that. Somehow, I have to show you why it's wrong, and I'm not sure I'm gonna be going about this right, but it's all I can do. I think the Jewish people back in the last century had the right idea when they demanded that the Holocaust never be forgotten, and that children in school needed to be educated about the past, starting at a very young age."

"We do get history class at school, Grandpa," said Danny. "We do learn about the Trouble and about the Seven Weeks War, and Mr. Makepeace and Ms. Harding remember the time when Jefferson County was occupied by Northwest troops, and sometimes they tell us

some of their personal experiences. Grandpa, I grew up not ten miles from the border. I know how it got there. I know what happened back then."

Somewhat to her surprise, her grandfather didn't get angry. "No, honey, the fact is you don't," he told her. "Learning dates and facts in school isn't the same thing as actually knowing. You have to have lived through it, and I don't mean sitting on the sidelines back east somewhere reading news websites, either. Yes, I know that sounds like the sum of a dozen clichés, but what can I tell you? It's pretty much a given that the young never really listen to the old. That's true of every generation of people everywhere, and it has been for thousands of years. I don't know why your parents and me would expect it to be different for us. But somehow, in this one case, I have to change that. You're sixteen years old, so of *course* you think you know it all. I knew it all myself when I was your age. Sometimes that's even kind of cute, but this isn't cute and it's not a phase. You have to do a major course correction, sweetie, and you have to do it now, and all your folks and I can do is hope and pray that somehow we were able to give you enough—oh, moral infrastructure I guess you'd call it, over the past sixteen years so you'll make the right choice. God, I hope we did, and somewhere in you, you've got what you need to make the right decision now."

Abruptly, Elwood pulled off to the side of the road. "This is it," he said. "Get out here." They both got out of the truck. There seemed nothing unusual or significant about this empty stretch of highway; it was just around the bend from a low pine-covered hill. Along the east side of the road ran a low wash or ditch which had been excavated and maintained by decades of road crews along the lower stretches as an emergency channel during flash floods, so the waters would not suddenly surge over the roadway and strand motorists, or wash them away. "Come here," said Elwood, beckoning to his granddaughter to follow him. He limped off the side of the road and pulled himself up a small rise, leaning heavily on his cane, and they looked down into a wide, rocky ditch, completely dry at this time of the year. There was silence except for the stir of a soft breeze and the whirring of crickets in the grass. "There. That's the place."

"What place, Grandpa?" asked Danny.

"A place of the kind I could show you a couple of dozen of, on both sides of the Road," Elwood told her. "Remember, in those days Jefferson County was easily twice the size it is now, with half of it on the west side of Interstate 15, as it was called in those days. I suppose in those history classes you mentioned and maybe from listening to old coots my age talk, you'll know that when I was your age, fifty years ago, back before the Trouble started, Jefferson County was not only bigger than it is now but there were a lot more people, people of all races, including a lot of people from Mexico and Central America. Mostly they came here as migrant laborers, and after a while some of them stayed on. We even had street signs and store signs in Spanish. Yeah, they could be irritating, not speaking English even when they knew how and trying to get the rest of us to learn Spanish, and yeah, they liked their drugs, and they lied to get on welfare, and all the rest of it. They weren't perfect. No race of people is. But they never took anything we didn't give them for the sake of their labor. That was the trade-off. They worked cheap, and everybody looked the other way when they stole to make up for it. But they worked hard, like white people wouldn't do any more, and they made farming and ranching possible on a lot bigger scale. Sometimes the only way a farmer or rancher could keep his head above water was to hire Latino illegals. White women had started to have their own careers by then, or actually most of 'em just had jobs, but we always said careers to be polite, and they pretty much stopped having babies. After a few years there just weren't enough white people left who wanted to do the kind of hard work the Mexicans did, and so they became necessary to the economy and a normal part of everyday life.

"But there were always those who refused to accept them, who wanted to live in a past that was over and done, and who responded with bigotry and hate," the old man went on. "That's why the old government passed laws against hatecrime and hatespeech, and for a long time that took care of the problem and made the racist and resentful whiteboys shut the hell up and keep their evil thoughts to themselves. But then the national security agencies screwed up, and they didn't nip that fat old bastard in Washington and his computer in the bud, like they should have done. One day people finally started listening to him, and then all of a sudden we had the goddamned Party everywhere, even

here in Jefferson County, and then Coeur d'Alene went up. I was still in Iran when that happened. Well, I'm sure you learned all the names and dates and bare facts in school."

"Yes, I did." Danny hesitated. She had never before heard her grandfather say even this much about the old days, and she was fascinated, but she didn't want to upset him and make him angry, because she wanted him to keep on talking. "Uh, Grandpa, you know they tell that story a little different Over The Road."

"I'm sure they do," replied the old man dryly. "Anyway, when I got out of the military shortly after that Coeur d'Alene mess and came home, things weren't all that bad in Jefferson County yet, but already the sheriff's department had a PATU going. That's Police Anti-Terrorist Unit. I joined right away because if I did so within ninety days of my army discharge, I got to keep my full military pay as well as get a deputy sheriff's salary. I lived with my folks, until they had to leave when it got too dangerous because of what I was doing, and after that I lived in the bunkhouse at the station. I saved every penny of my pay I could and that's how I got the down payment for our land where your dad and your uncles and aunts and you kids as well were born and raised. Better yet, I got to keep my full medical benefits and health insurance, for me and my family, and in those days that was a big thing, even more important than the money. It wasn't like today when we can go down to see Doctor King at the clinic for twenty-five New American Dollars a visit plus the cost of whatever medicine he gives you; in those days if you had a family member who got sick or hurt up bad, or you did, you could lose your house and everything you owned. Then you got sent to the government doctors who were all brown-colored Third World people who didn't speak English and who didn't have real medical degrees."

"That medical insurance didn't help your leg when you got shot, Grandpa," said Danny, pointing to her grandfather's knee and cane.

"No, it didn't," said the old man sadly. "They said they was out of money by the time I got hurt. Well, government promises never were much."

"So, why did we have to come all the way out here for you to talk about this?" asked Danny, gesturing to the empty wash.

"Don't worry, honey, I ain't gone senile on you, I'm getting to it. Anyway, the months and the years went on and nobody ever could seem to get a grip on the goots. They were always a jump or two ahead of us. In the early part of the Trouble our PATU unit spent a lot of time down around Missoula and we even used to go up to north Idaho, doing sweeps, trying to catch that son-of-a-bitch Oglevy. We never got near him, which I suppose is a good thing, since most of those who did never came back to tell about it. But things were quiet here in Jefferson for the first couple of years. We knew some of the local people were involved in it. They'd been reading bad books and getting emails and looking at websites they shouldn't have been for a long time. Mostly no-goods, trailer trash, thieving redneck drunks like the Selkirks, plus some of our home-grown right-wing kooks who should have known better. FEMA came in and sent some of them down to Nevada and New Mexico, and made them live in secure facilities where they could be watched and they'd stay out of trouble. That might have been a bad public relations move, because it pissed off a lot of people. But finally the Trouble itself came to Jefferson County. Right here." Elwood pointed to the dry wash.

"What happened?" asked Danny, intrigued.

"The local farmers and ranchers who employed Hispanic people weren't fools, and there had been enough incidents elsewhere around the Northwest for them to understand that their workers were at risk," the old man told her. "So they started up all kinds of security procedures, fortifying the migrant worker camps with razor wire and sandbags and closed-circuit TV cameras, posting armed guards selected from among the Mex like a kind of militia, moving them from site to site in convoys or at least armored buses, that kind of thing."

"But why not just send them home, or at least out of the danger zone?" asked Danny.

"Because we needed their labor still, and because at that time it was the proudest boast of the United States of America that we never negotiated with or gave in to terrorists," replied the old man. "At least it was until that bubble-headed bimbo Chelsea Clinton got in," he added bitterly. "Anyway, one day in September, it would be—yeah, be forty-three years ago next month—a big busload of Mexican migrant workers

was coming down this highway, from that direction." He pointed to the wooded hill. "They were coming from the Salter Mackintosh spread where they'd been picking late apples and maize, heading over to the Whyo Ranch where they were going to cut and bale the last of the year's hay for Bubba Whyo's horses. That's what he raised, horses for Hollywood movies. There was a PATU escort, two Humvees, one in front and one in back. The one in front had an M-60, that's a machine gun, mounted on it, and the one in back had a fifty-cal, that's a bigger machine gun, but it wasn't much of an escort. Just two PATU deputies in each Humvee and a fifth man on the bus. You need to understand that there'd been a few minor incidents but no actual flat-out NVA activity in Jefferson County, Montana up until that time."

"Were you one of the deputies, Grandpa?" asked Danny.

"No, I was not, to my eternal regret," replied Elwood with a sigh. "I knew them all, though. Especially Jerry Parsley. Known him since kindergarten. Anyway, the convoy had just come around that hill over there when an old junker car guided by a remote control device that had been sitting on the side of the road revved up and rammed into the lead Humvee. Then it must have been at least twenty NVA gunmen opened up on them. We had no idea there was a unit that size operating anywhere nearer than Missoula. Well, our intelligence in that war always was shit," he growled. "The goots killed all four of the PATU men in the Humvees, blew the door of the bus open with C-4, and threatened to set it on fire if the Mexicans didn't come out. They did, and so did Jerry Parsley, the one PATU man on the bus. They cuffed Jerry and shoved him down in the dirt alongside the road, set a guard on him, then they used plastic ties to bind all the Mexicans' hands behind their backs. There were twenty-six of them, men and women, some as old as their sixties, my age, and some as young as you, fifteen or sixteen. They marched them over here to this wash, right down along in there," he said, pointing. "Then they made them get down on their knees, and one by one, they shot every one of those people in the head, and left them there for the buzzards.

"They murdered twenty-six people, Danielle, right here where you're looking at, for the crime of having a dark skin and speaking a different language. The NVA called that kind of thing a Gofer, from

G.O. Four, General Order Four. That's about two sentences they put up on a web site which they used as their official excuse for murdering anybody they didn't like, or anybody who got in their way. You know, I've always been amazed that when you listen to discussion shows or watch documentaries on the Plate or anything allegedly historical about all this, if you're not careful you'd think it was only white people involved. You know those famous rebel songs their folk singer groups do with all the fiddles and guitars and banjos and flutes and whatnot, the ones you sometimes hear on the radio and netfeed from Over The Road? The ones I hear some of you ignorant kids over here on our side who don't know any better secretly playing on your laptops and handpacks, with the buds in your ears you think us old folks can't hear if we're close enough? Maybe some songs you and your boyfriend have heard when you're sampling all the fine cuisine over at that honky-tonk in Basin?"

"I've heard some of them, yes," admitted Danielle cautiously.

"Those songs are lies, Danny. They don't tell the truth, not all of it, not by a long shot, and with something like the Trouble, not to tell the whole truth is sometimes the worst lie of all. Those stupid songs with their infantile boasting are all about the white heroes and the white dead on both sides. The black and brown dead are just animals to them, so they don't bother to remember, and to us they're a source of shame, because an American president abandoned them and made all their death and suffering for nothing, so we don't remember them either. I think maybe some of those old liberal assholes must have got it right. Racism really is ingrained deep into white people's bones. Okay, come on, get back in the truck."

As they were rolling down the road, the old man chuckled. "I can hear you thinking to yourself now, *Well, that wasn't so bad. The old fart told me an atrocity story from before I was born, which has nothing at all to do with me, and now maybe he'll be satisfied and quit pestering me about my bonnie Nazi laddie.* Am I right about that?"

"Uh, *is* that it?" asked Danny.

"And what did you think of my little anecdote from days of yore?" asked the old man with a tight smile.

"Grandpa, look, it's horrible, and I know you were there and I wasn't . . ."

Elwood chuckled. "But you can't wrap your mind around it, as we used to say back in my day. Or what else was it? Oh, yeah, you can't get your arms around it. Danny, that's great. You shouldn't *have* to deal with something like that in your mind. Racial mass murder *should* be something completely unimaginable to you at age sixteen, and I'm glad it is. You've never met a Mexican, although I hear that may change soon, and I might as well be telling you a fairy tale. Now comes the hard part. I am going to have to try and make you understand what that one horrible act and everything that proceeded from it did to this community and to every one of us who lived through it. Although maybe it won't be the hard part. This has to do with people. People you know."

"I know what John's grandfather did to you, Grandpa," said Danny quietly. "I've known for a long time who did it, and every day I see you limping with that cane I'm reminded of it. Johnny . . ." She bit her lip.

"Don't tell me. He says he's sorry," replied Elwood with a harrumph.

"No. He just says he wishes it never happened, but it did, and I had to decide if I could live with it."

"Obviously you've decided that you can," said Elwood in a neutral tone.

"Johnny didn't shoot you, Grandpa. The Captain did."

"Captain?" asked Elwood. "I heard Ray worked his way up to colonel in the Seven Weeks?"

"That was . . . that was his Volunteer rank," said Danny, squirming. "He prefers that one."

"Yeah, that's Ray Selkirk, all right," growled the old man. "A lot more proud of himself for shooting unarmed people in the head than fighting against people who shoot back."

"Wars have to stop sometime, Grandpa," she went on doggedly. "When? Where? Am I supposed to still hate the British for the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812? Am I supposed to still hate

the Germans for World War Two? Am I still supposed to hate Muslims for Iraq and Afghanistan and Iran?"

"Actually, yeah, you are on those last two, but that's another story," replied Elwood with a sigh. "Anyway, where was I? Oh, yeah. The human side of their glorious War of Independence. You remember I mentioned Jerry Parsley, who was on that bus Ray and his boys ambushed?"

"What did they do to him?" asked Danielle anxiously.

"They left him lying by the side of the road hog-tied, smelling the burning flesh of his own men in the Humvees and hearing the shots and the screams and pleas for mercy of the dying people he was supposed to protect, a sound he never was able to get out of his mind. Ray Selkirk even gave him a little pep talk about how the NVA didn't like killing their fellow white men and maybe he needed to wake up his ideas and get on the right side. That's how we found him. He was cleared in the official investigation and he came back to the unit, but he warn't no good after that. Fell apart, became a drunk, and after a couple of months he got re-assigned to desk duty at the station. Eight months after the ambush back there Jerry went home one night and stuck his own gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger."

"I'm sorry."

"You have no need to be," said her grandfather, shaking his head. "You never knew the man and all this happened before you were born. But a lot of bad came from that day's work. For one thing, virtually every Hispanic in the county, legal or illegal, packed their bags and ran like hell, so Ray and his crew accomplished their mission. Within a very short time this part of the world was nice and lily white again, just like they wanted it. That left most of the businesses and damned near all the farms and ranches deadly short on workers. Crops rotted in the fields, cattle never made it to market because they broke the unmended fences and wandered off into the hills. Horses out on the range ran wild or died without winter fodder. Hogs and chickens had to be slaughtered early because there was no one to feed and maintain hundreds of them at a time and so egg production went as well. The turkey farm out on Highway 91 closed down. The meat-packing plant and sausage factory in Boulder and the smelting plant in Basin closed

down for lack of anybody to run the line or the casting mill. Retail businesses that had depended on their Mexican customers closed down and, so more people lost their jobs. You get the idea. Okay, maybe part of that was our fault because white people got too high and mighty to work out in the hot sun on a farm or a ranch and get their hands dirty. But it was the way it was, and for Jefferson County the Trouble was an unmitigated disaster.

"In order to save anything at all, our young people had to start coming back to help out, back from college, back from the cities, back from their jobs and careers and the lives they'd made for themselves, giving up their own American dream to make sure their parents and their friends back here didn't lose everything. Farms and ranches and homes were foreclosed or else simply abandoned because there was nobody to work them. Almost everybody in the county had their lives changed forever because of a small handful of half-insane people who decided that they were going to re-order everything to suit themselves, that they alone were right and everybody else was wrong, that nothing mattered but their own desires, and that any other person who disagreed with them or tried to resist them was just an obstacle to be clubbed down or shot out of the way."

"But was it such a bad thing for those people to have to come back home?" argued Danny. "From what happened to America's cities since then, I'd say they were lucky in the long run."

"Maybe, but it was their decision to make!" snapped Elwood. "It wasn't up to the goddamned NVA to make it for them! Pardon my language. Your mother is right, I cuss too much, but so did everybody when I was growing up. And because we were too morally squeamish to keep on fighting for the right when the going got too tough, because we were foolish enough to elect a weak and silly woman as president just because of her family name and because her mother decided she wanted to pass on her job to her daughter, because of our own failure to stand up against evil, that evil has now taken root in three new generations of those vicious bastards, and we may never again see our country united and plain human decency in charge again!"

"Grandpa, Johnny is not evil!" cried Danny. "I'm sorry if that makes you mad, but he's not!"

"Okay, fair enough. I've never met the boy, after all. He doesn't seem to mind breaking the law, our law, but of course their great pride and boast is that they have won the right not to obey our laws by shooting a lot of tied-up people through the head and blowing a lot of other people up with Semtex. And there's no law to break over on his side, so maybe the smuggling thing has nothing to do with money and it's just high spirits. Or something." Tolliver sighed. "Right. Maybe he's not evil, Danny, maybe not in the sense I mean. Is a tiger evil when he stalks and kills and eats a human child? True, the tiger can't change what he is, and no doubt God in His infinite wisdom has some reason for making tigers, but the fact remains that what the tiger is cannot be tolerated in any civilized society, and he has to be hunted down and killed or caged. Look, John Selkirk is a lot older than you, am I right?"

"He's twenty," said Danny. "And yeah, I could understand you and Mom and Dad objecting to him on those grounds, but they do things differently Across The Road. A lot of girls my age over there get married . . ." She suddenly fell silent.

"Gone that far has it?" asked Elwood with a weary sigh.

"He hasn't asked me," said Danny.

"And what will you say if he does?" asked her grandfather.

"I don't know," she said softly.

"Look, will you at least come to us and talk to us before you do anything?" he asked urgently. "Don't just disappear out of your room one night and the next thing we hear you're Over The Road and married into that . . . family!"

"I wouldn't do that to you," said Danny.

"Glad to hear it. Anyway, what I was getting at, is that your beau has done his mandatory military training over there, right?"

"Yes," she told him.

"So he's part of the killing machine now, no matter how un-evil you think he is. He is a soldier in what I must in all honesty admit to be the most professional, dangerous, and brutally efficient military force on the planet. They pride themselves on being a nation of soldiers, and to give the devils their due, it paid off for them twenty-eight years ago. Have you thought about what will happen if there's another war?"

"No," she admitted.

"You know if you go over there before you're married and get knocked up, you'll have to do national service in their Labor thingie? Why do you think all those girls on their side who get married at sixteen do so? They don't feel like getting sent to work in a tuna cannery in Alaska. Not to mention the moral aspect. Would you be willing to actively support a nation that is responsible for forty years of untold bloodshed and horror?" he pressed her. "You need to think about these things, Danny. A man is known by the company he keeps, and so is a woman. And the company you will be keeping is evil, make no mistake."

"I don't know what you mean by that!" said Danny, on the verge of tears.

"God gives men free will because He wants us to *choose* good, Danny. Every one of us has to try, and heaven knows, many of us fail. But these people Across The Road don't even *try* to choose the light and the good any more. They're not only comfortable with their demons, they've taken them into partnership. They have systemized their inhumanity, and they have created an entire society based on a moral inversion. Forty-five years ago they were confronted with the manifest will of God, and they refused to accept it."

"Huh?" asked Danny, confused.

"Their ideology is absolutely right about one thing, honey," her grandfather said. "The white race really was on the verge of extinction back then, the only race on earth that was. Fifty years ago, us palefaces were only eight percent of the world's population, and white women of child-bearing age were only about three percent. If these people hadn't done what they did, it is entirely possible, indeed likely, that I would be one of the youngest remaining Caucasians on the planet, and that if you existed at all you would be the color of my morning coffee. The simple fact was that for whatever inscrutable reason, it was clear that God or Nature or whatever cosmic force is applicable had made the decision. White people were on their way out. But that fat old swine and his computer said no. Somehow, God knows how, he managed to get some people to listen to him. I recall reading somewhere that even he himself never understood how he did it, he just kept on hammering and hammering away, and one day it just kind of came together. Collectively this little bunch of misfits and gangsters and white trash decided that they knew

better than God or destiny how the world was to proceed. Our race had a chance to die with dignity back then, and perhaps those who inherited the earth might eventually have remembered us gratefully and even a little fondly for all the good things Western civilization left them. But those sons of bitches like Ray Selkirk weren't having any. They refused to lose with gentlemanly good grace. They chose to shed blood rather than lose. And once white men started shedding blood again, they discovered that we're quite good at it. *Too* damn good at it, in fact. The rest, as they say, is history. I'm sorry, kiddo," he sighed in conclusion. "I shouldn't have ranted on and on like that. I don't talk about these things much."

"That's okay, Grandpa. But are you saying you think the white race really should have died out back then?" asked Danny, puzzled.

Elwood answered slowly. "Danny, have you ever seen any horror movies about the Donner Party, or that soccer team crashed in the Andes long ago, or people in a lifeboat out at sea, when the choice has to be made either to become a cannibal and eat one's fellow sufferers, or to die oneself? It's a horrible moral dilemma for a person, but it is the one the entire white race of people faced back in the early part of this century. How far does sheer survival justify a person, or a group of people, committing terrible acts that are not only a crime but a sin? This is where the abyss opens up between people like me and Ray Selkirk, the head of the family that you are at least partly considering joining, The abyss between everything we have tried to teach you to be, and the terrible nation of hate-filled killers you are considering becoming part of. Ray Selkirk wanted his children, if any, to look like him, and for that reason he chose to shoot twenty-six helpless people through the head. That decision is not morally admissible, for any reason. It can't be allowed."

"Then what is the right choice if you're stuck in a lifeboat and there's no more food?" asked Danny. "Let the others eat *you*?"

"Yes," said Elwood quietly. "If you truly wish to prove for all time that you are morally superior, you voluntarily surrender your own life rather than take that of someone else. There aren't very many white people left in the United States, Danny, and at some point all those colored people will probably break out of the cities and overrun the countryside and devour us, maybe quite literally. But I at least shall not die a monster. Ray Selkirk will."

XXXII

War By Other Means

(40 Years, ten months and two days after Longview)

Politics is war by other means.
—Newt Gingrich

One of a Civil Guard station commander's perks was subsidized accommodation for himself and his family. Housing in the Guard barracks was available for single troopers, but it was assumed that anyone who had risen to the rank of lieutenant would be married with children. If he wasn't, he'd better have a good explanation, such as being scarred for life in the face by acid. Although public discussion of homosexuality had disappeared from the NAR, to the point where many adults didn't even know what it was, one of the internal immune systems that had been carefully distilled into the Northwest's mores and mindset by the Ministry of Culture was a *sub rosa* but significant social stigma against anyone who remained unmarried and without children. In the NAR, marriage was considered the normal condition of life for adult people. It wasn't legally mandated, but the social pressures were immense. They were seldom needed, since of course marriage *was* the normal condition of life in Aryan societies. One of the things the MoC had discovered early on was that it was actually very easy to gently, imperceptibly steer white people back into the way that their racial instincts told them things ought to be.

For the duration of their tour of duty in Basin district, Bobby and Allura Campbell lived in a spacious hundred-year-old, bungalow-style brick house on a back road about a mile from the station. It had a large fenced yard with discreet electric rattlesnake, cougar, and thylacine barriers for their three children to play in, although a grizzly bear

or a Sasquatch might present a problem, should one ever wander out of the mountains. There was a triple carpad at the side of the house for levitational vehicles, and a satellite uplink on the roof with full encryption capability for Bobby's office, so he could work from home when required.

Their son Clancy was twelve now, a tall and athletic boy. These days, until school started again in a couple of weeks, he spent most of his time herding his two beloved younger sisters around like a sheep dog. Catherine Campbell was seven years old and insatiably curious about everything; she knew in no uncertain terms that she was to stay away from the family guns, but beyond that she had to be watched to make sure she didn't take needed household appliances apart to see what was inside. Morag was three, and spent most of her day attempting to break the speed of sound around the house and the yard. "God, I'll be glad when she can start kindergarten!" said Allura that night when Bobby Three came in. "Clancy took her out and let her just run up and down the road with the dog this afternoon, and it didn't slow her down one bit. She's still out there tearing up and down and wrestling with Dave." Through some arcane process Bobby Three didn't understand, the elder girl Cathy had acquired the right to name the family's latest herd of animals when they had arrived in Basin, and she had been in an onomatopoeic mood. Now they now had Dave the dog, Carl the cat, Bill the bird, and Thomas the turtle, as well as Frank, Fred, Phyllis, and Felix the fish. Morag was in the back yard playing tug of war with Dave, a black Labrador, using an old towel, and the two of them were whirling over the landscape like dervishes. Bobby stuck his head out of the window and yelled, "Clancy! Keep them away from the picnic table and the barbecue grill and make sure they don't knock anything over! I'm coming out and lighting up as soon as your grandfather and Uncle Tom and your cousins get here!"

"When the full zoo arrives we'll have to chase them out into the front yard or we won't be able to cook," said Allura.

There was a beeping noise which told Allura and Bobby that a vehicle was descending onto their carpad outside. He glanced at the screen and saw that it was in fact two vehicles. Ally leaned out the window. "Clancy!" she called out. "Make sure the girls and the dog are

away from the pad!" The carpad had a fail-safe mechanism that would shut down and halt the descent automatically when someone stepped onto the metal tarmac, which was rather like a gigantic circuit board, and there were safety features on the cars themselves that would prevent them landing on human beings, but family policy required a quick roll-call any time the landing alarm sounded. All were duly present and accounted for.

Bobby Three and Allura walked out and greeted his father and his mother, who were getting out of one large flying SUV, as well as his BOSS uncle Major Thomas Horakova and Tom's wife Marie with their brood of young maniacs, all up from Missoula for the weekend. Colonel Robert Campbell Junior's hair and beard were turning gray, and his erect body starting to fill out. He wore the wear and tear of years well, but it was there. At 53, Milada Campbell was now the image of an old-country grandmother. She embraced her son. "Hi, Mom," he said. "Nick and Ida couldn't make it?" His sister and her Russian-born scientist husband lived in the national spaceport town of Centralia, Washington, along with their own three children.

"No, Nick had to work," Millie told him. "Some rocket going up that couldn't leave the earth's atmosphere without him." Millie went to hug Allura.

"Hey, Dad. Hey, Uncle Tom," said Bobby Three, shaking hands with both men. "Thought we'd do some buffalo burgers and boerwors tonight." Northwest cookouts were much like the traditional American version, but the beer and the meat were cheaper and sometimes a bit more exotic, like the South African farmers' sausage that had become popular in the Republic.

"Sounds good," said his father, who had become Big Bob over the years in order to distinguish him from his son. "Better than Old Bob," had been his verdict. The four Horakova kids ran into the back yard to play with their Campbell cousins. Allura and Millie and Marie followed them around the side of the house. "Come on back when you're ready to start cooking and we'll move the thundering herd out here so we can hear ourselves talk," called Allura.

"Bobby, I appreciate the invitation, but the fact is Tom and I would have been up here to see you about now anyway," his father told him.

"Tom needs to brief you on a few things. This comes from Olympia, PB level. There's something going on Over The Road, and it's not too savory. We may be hanging around for a while. Tom might be, anyway. This is something we need to keep an eye on."

"Mmm, the Political Bureau and a senior Guardsman and a State Security officer usually aren't a very good combination," replied Bobby Three with a frown. "Every time I see you two guys together on an official basis it reminds me of that wretched Lost Creek business. This gonna get that hairy?"

"Not immediately," said Tom. "At least I don't think so. We would have come down to your office, but we have to assume that the Billings government and maybe others have eyes and ears in Basin, and we'd rather nobody Over The Road finds out that BOSS is interested just yet. We'll let 'em think they've still got us fooled. Let's keep it informal for now. After supper Marie and the kids will go on over to the guest house, and we can have a few quiet words."

Later that night the three men sat out on the porch. Marie and the Horakova children had taken one of the levitators to the guest house where they would be staying for the weekend, since the Campbells' current place wasn't really large enough to accommodate so many people overnight even when couches and sleeping bags were pressed into service. Ally and Millie were inside putting the girls to bed, while Clancy was out back using an incinerator barrel to burn all the flammable detritus from the supper, plus anything else he could find to fuel the flames and satisfy youth's natural urge to destroy, although Bobby made sure he had a fire extinguisher handy. "Keep an eye on the sparks. Starting a forest fire is not the best way to impress our new community here," he had sternly warned his son. The three of them leaned back, finishing off large glasses of draft Red Hook beer in Big Bob and Tom's case, and iced tea in Bobby's. "So what's up?"

"Our neighbors across the way over there in Boulder are going to be getting a visit soon," said Tom. "A dusky African maiden bearing gifts, all the way from the New England Union, no less, and it looks like she will have a few security consultants in her entourage she shouldn't have. One is an officer from the New Model Army. The other two appear to be undercover FBI agents."

"*What*?" exclaimed Bobby. "You're kidding! NMA and feebs on the border? That's in violation of the Armistice!"

"An Armistice from twenty-eight years ago that never metamorphosed into an actual peace treaty, and whose provisions in some areas were always rather murky," said Colonel Campbell. "The same old problem. Negotiating a formal and binding treaty requires that both parties acknowledge the other exists. The United States still insists that we are a blank spot on the map that suddenly fell off the face of the earth forty years ago. It's a gray area. Technically speaking, the FBI is a criminal organization from our point of view, and they are not allowed in the demilitarized zone, but they do slip in and out on occasion for various nefarious purposes, and as long as they don't make a habit of it and they don't stick around, we usually don't make an issue of it."

"Who the hell is this negress and why the hell is she bringing feebs to Boulder, Montana?" asked Bobby Three.

"Here's where it gets complicated," Tom told him. "Bear in mind that we don't know everything ourselves, and some of this is educated guesswork. The negress in question is named Gabrielle Martine. She's one of the carefully trained and educated ones from their small black élite they still present for token diversity, to maintain the pretense that those things are equal to people in some way. She's an assistant director with the United States Economic Recovery Administration out of Burlington, Vermont, which as you know is now the effective capital of the U.S.A. Washington, D.C., is now a mostly symbolic, fortified enclave that has to be supplied by air because the roads are all out and the overland route is too dangerous due to marauding Third Worlders and general bandits. The ERA is planning on building what they call a CPZ, a Community Prosperity Zone over there in American Jefferson County."

"A what?" asked Bobby.

"A kind of big industrial park with all kinds of mostly hi-tech and big-ticket industry," said Horakova. "Scientific research labs, factories for pharmaceuticals and top-end electrical components, chemical processing plants, food processing plants, a plastics factory, a major internet server hub. Also a couple of meat-packing plants for those parts of the United States where meat is legal now, and for the local farmers and ranchers

there will be agricultural stations, fertilizer and agricultural implement factories, everything they need to revive farming and livestock in American Montana into a profitable and productive industry. This will bring a lot of new people into the area, skilled technical and scientific and administrative types, who will be getting paid big New American bucks. They'll require housing, goods, and services, and so there are also plans on the drawing board for a couple of upscale malls with Mighty Marts, fancy fern bar restaurants, boutiques . . . the usual latté town appurtenances. Plus these newcomers will need nice new McMansions to live in, so there will be a construction boom of the kind the American side hasn't seen for a long time, which will in turn generate more money and new residents, so forth and so on."

"Uh, okay, I guess that's great news for the folks Across The Road, but why Jefferson County, of all places?" asked Bobby.

"Therein lies the question," Tom said soberly.

"Somebody in Burlington wants to play chicken with the Republic? They just decided they want to come up to the Border Highway and thumb their nose at us? Why?" inquired Bobby.

"It may seem that way at first glance, but in their madness is method. The intelligence eggheads and analysts and gamers at the Circus and CMI have come up with a possible theory, and right now the PB thinks it's the most likely scenario. The theory is that the Americans and the East Canadians, who also seem to be involved, are gearing up for a Cold War. You remember that term from your history classes about the 20th Century?"

"Yeah," replied Bobby. "I didn't think the United States was in any position to wage any kind of war against us, cold or hot."

"To their everlasting chagrin, no, they are not," replied Big Bob with a smile. "We are the regional superpower. The only other nations on earth with a military considered strong enough to take on the NDF are China and Russia. We've a long-standing and mutually beneficial entente with Moscow, and the Chinks steer clear of us. They got burned during the Seven Weeks when they backed the beaners down south and they lost a lot of pilots and copters and treasure. They won't throw good men and money after bad unless they have a serious reason, which so far hasn't been the case. They have all the rest of the world

to play with. That may be changing, though we haven't detected any wily Oriental gentlemen involved in ERA activity yet. Rather the reverse. The Chinese don't *want* the United States or Europe to recover economically."

"I thought America pretty much fell to pieces after the Seven Weeks," said Bobby Three. "Hell, from what a couple of blockade runners who just came back from Minneapolis a few days ago told me, it's all they can do to keep their own cities from bursting open like a leper's boil and washing like a poison tide over the whole countryside."

"That's been the situation for quite some time, yes, but the American government is trying to change that, or at least figure out a way to deal with it when it happens," replied Tom seriously. "This is going to take some explaining.

"You know that after the loss of the Seven Weeks War and the death of Hunter Wallace, the United States and to a lesser extent East Canada pretty much imploded as powerful central governments? Imperial America was always based on force, ever since Abraham Lincoln called up one hundred thousand soldiers to kill and coerce other Americans. Then after we kicked America's ass, the D.C. régime lacked the police and military muscle to enforce their will on what part of the continent remained to them. Effective power devolved back to the state and local levels. Large parts of the United States reverted almost to a situation of the kind that existed prior to 1861, where state and local government ran everything for the benefit of their own communities, which was what the Founding Fathers originally intended back in 1789."

"Yeah," said Bobby with a nod. "Basically, in scattered parts of the country where white people were still the majority and still more or less in charge, they were able to establish enclaves where the electricity still worked, the cops and fire department got paid, the roads got repaired, the hospitals still functioned, and there was still food on the grocery store shelves, at least local produce. The big energy conglomerates had mostly moved offshore by then to escape ONI's confiscatory taxation and nationalization, but they were still able to supply enough petroleum-based fuel to keep essential industries and transport rolling."

"Mmm hmm," said Big Bob. "In a weird kind of way, the Seven Weeks War was actually the best thing that ever happened to rural and

small-town America for generations. Massive military defeat and the collapse of the federal government finally got the bureaucrats and their political correctness off people's backs in rural Kansas and Kentucky and Wisconsin and so on, and folks in what they used to call Flyover Country were able to rebuild their lives to some degree. The niggers and the spics gravitated to the cities and stayed there, because that was where the welfare and the rum ration was. Not that some of the state and local governments weren't just as bad."

"What you have to bear in mind, Bobby, was that just as it always has been on this continent since 1492, *race* was the primary issue," said Tom. "The essential question of *whose land this is* was never settled, or even honestly discussed, by the old order. Under ONI most American cities became almost totally non-white and completely custodial. There is no industry, no commerce except the local Korean market, and nothing in the cities except feral niggers and beaners and wogs hanging around waiting to be fed, clothed, housed, and entertained by the white man. For generations now, the black and brown inhabitants of the cities have been given tax money to keep them doped up, stop them from rioting, and get them to keep their violence and their squalor away from the remaining white communities. The yellows and the turbans were given the franchise to profit by relieving the blacks and browns in the cities of all that government money, in their capacity as ghetto merchants. That had already been the case for almost a century under the old liberal democracy, starting with the non-white neighborhoods in the cities, but by the time of the war the white population had all fled to the few remaining secure cities with Green Zones, like Washington, D.C., or else they fled out into the countryside and the gated liberal latté towns like Ann Arbor, Charlottesville, Chapel Hill, Burlington, and so on."

"Gated being a polite circumlocution for fortified to keep the niggers and beaners away from the pale quivering asses of the Jews and liberals who created the problem in the first place," growled Big Bob.

"You got it," Tom continued with a nod. "The increasing sums of money needed to bribe the non-whites into quiescence were created by the Jews at the Federal Reserve, who simply fired up the printing

presses. I'm sure Bob here recalls the incredible hyper-inflation from that one time he went Out There just before the war started?"

"You guys remember my cover was operating as a buttlegger and a beeflegger?" Bob asked them. "I used to get paid for a few cartons of smokes or a couple of pounds of pork chops with ten-thousand-dollar bills, and they were about to bring out a fifty-grand bill before the war broke out."

"The system was wobbly, but it worked and it maintained the pretense that something called the United States of America still existed, even if it was a truncated version, minus the Northwest and the Southwest," said Tom. "Then came the military disaster of the Seven Weeks, and for almost a generation after that, what was left of the old Judæo-liberal system fought like a trapped crocodile to stay alive. They've managed to do so, just barely. Six years ago they finally managed to get rid of the dozen or so regional money zones and re-establish a single currency again, the New American Dollar, throughout most of the remaining forty-one states, or bits and pieces of states like East Montana and American Texas. But the problem of the quarantined cities, with their seething millions of hungry and angry non-whites, is still their overwhelming major issue. It may yet destroy them if they can't keep the lid on."

"They're having a hard time these days keeping up the pretense that it's not racial," said Big Bob. "The mercenaries the Burlington régime has to hire for the New Model Army are almost all white or Asian, including a lot of really nasty Pakistanis. Now they're looking for an excuse to bring them right up here to our border. The question is why?"

"All very interesting, but what does that have to do with a negress descending from Olympus-by-Lake-Champlain and showering the palefaces in Boulder with jobs and money and goodies?" asked Bobby Three.

"Mmm, this is a little more speculative. Bearing in mind the reality of the American situation we've just discussed, and to a somewhat lesser extent the East Canadian sitch, put yourself in their place. If you were their old order, and you wanted to hold onto power and not have the whole show blotted out by a massive eruption of mud-colored savages

from multiple reservations around the country, what would you do?" asked Tom.

"Carpet-bomb the cities," said Bobby immediately. "It's absolutely essential from their régime's point of view—hell, from *our* point of view as well—that at long last something be done to redress the population imbalance between those who produce and those who do nothing but consume. Their system just can't take it any more. Non-whites have been flowing into North America and breeding like rabbits for over a century now. They consume every available resource like locusts, faster than the white man can replace what they consume. Somehow or other, the white race in one final dying paroxysm has to make some kind of effort to *get them the hell out of here!"*

"The people running what's left of the United States and Canada know that," said Tom. "The Circus has most of their homes and offices and recreational areas bugged, and they occasionally send us interesting transcripts of what American and Canadian politicians say to one another behind closed doors. There are two problems with that solution, one logistic, and one political and spiritual from their point of view. First off, they no longer have the military power to simply go in and slaughter four hundred million non-whites. Not enough troops, not enough planes, not enough bombs, and not enough poison gas or bioweapons, which in most cases they've forgotten how to make anyway. They can't use their nuclear arsenal, if for no other reason than most of it seems to be non-functional now. The missiles have corroded away in their silos, half of them are unmanned, and no one seems to know if any of them would even lift off, never mind hit their targets."

Tom sighed and continued. "The second reason the Americans and Canadians will never use force against the boiling cauldrons of mud that now constitute their urban areas is that it is morally unthinkable to them. To finally be forced to deal with the perennial American problem of race through *force majeure* would constitute a complete and irrevocable admission on their part that Judæo-liberal democracy, secular humanism, and multiculturalism are *wrong*, that they are failed belief systems, and that everything that has happened on this continent since 1933 has been a horrific and appalling mistake that has come close to destroying the world. They will never, ever do that. Racial

equality, multiculturalism, philo-semitism and the Holocaust, the moral superiority of genteel liberal and Jewish élitists to everyone else on earth—Bobby, these things now constitute a full-blown *religion* to the dwindling number of wealthy and privileged people who run what used to be the Western world. That is one reason why they hate the Northwest Republic unto death and are still trying to destroy us even as they themselves sink out of sight into the muck of their own crapulence. The last of the old liberal power élite would die rather than admit that they have been wrong for two and a half centuries, ever since the first Boston Yankee abolitionist cranked out his first pamphlet back in the days of crinolines and laudanum. They may very well die, along with untold millions of others, when they keep on trying to solve the problem by applying a band-aid to the Black Death. Once more, put yourself in their place, Bobby. You're the ruling élite of a nation and a society that after over a century and a half of unspeakable abuse, is at long last about to come to an end in blood and madness. How do you put Humpty Dumpty together again one more time, even if only for a few years so it will last your own lifetime without you ever having to pay the bill which history will present? Which is all you care about. How do you accomplish that?"

"Hmm," ruminated Bobby, knocking back the last of his iced tea. "Well, I'd have to find some way to keep conditions in the cities stabilized. At least stop them from breeding like maggots on a piece of rotten meat. Maybe I'd sneakily dose their food and beverage rations with contraceptives and abortifacients, to try and at least cut down on the endless rabbit-like multiplication."

"The United States government has actually been doing just that for some years now," Tom told him. "That and the normal fifty percent urban infant mortality rate has managed to keep the dam from bursting completely in most cities. But it's not enough. Not only do wog and nigger babies die young, few of them make it past their late forties, so what we're looking at is huge concentrations of angry, uneducated, overmedicated and bird-brained stupid shitskins in their teens, twenties, and thirties. They are at the height of their physical strength and capacity for violence, and there are four hundred million of them, give or take."

"Damn!" muttered Bobby. "Obviously, from the Americans' point of view, all these niggers and beaners and wogs have to be kept sedated, or at least sedate. That means an endless stream of money, drugs, booze, and electronic and mechanical toys, which is a real drain on the shattered remains of the American economy, because when you give niggers money they just piss it up against a wall, and when you give them toys they just break them and cry for more. How long can any society keep on paying out that kind of extortion to a population group that produces nothing in return? But you say they've become too weak to fight, and I believe it. So our old American order needs to step up their game economically to make sure they can keep the goodies flowing and keep all the shitskins comatose and content."

"Exactly," said Tom.

"Okay, I begin to see the reason for these Community Prosperity Zone thingummies. The American régime is harnessing the last literate and productive people on the continent with any kind of work ethic and intelligence, i.e. America's last remaining white techies and administrators and producers. They're being brought together and their resources pooled so they can start turning out enough nice shiny toys and goods with which to bribe niggers not to riot. Boy, if that ain't a blast from the past!" concluded Bobby with a chuckle.

"Yes, that's true, as far as it goes," said Tom, his voice serious. "But there's a bigger picture. What do you think will happen if there is ever a major mud-spill from the cities, and millions of non-whites suddenly go marauding through the countryside in a tidal wave like fire ants, devouring and devastating everything in their path? Suppose these Community Prosperity Zones were near enough to Milwaukee or Philadelphia or New York City or Atlanta or Chicago to be in their path, again bearing in mind that once such a breakout occurred, then neither the United States nor Canada has either sufficient military might or the political will to stop them by force?"

"Bye-bye Community Prosperity," said Bobby with a grim chuckle. "Bye-bye community, period."

"Exactly," agreed Tom in a grim tone. "And bye-bye God knows how much of the world's rapidly dwindling white gene pool when the black and brown mobs break through the yuppies' and techies' security

fences, batter down their doors, and set fire to their homes with the wretched white victims inside. WPB analysts project that given the sheer overwhelming number of blacks involved, and the shortage along their line of march of the vast quantities of processed or raw foodstuffs necessary to feed millions of them, cannibalism will become part of each horde's internal subculture and will be quite a regular thing."

"Which is why they're trying to get these last islands of economic life and production out of the way of the mudflow," said Bobby Three slowly.

"Ah, comes the dawn!" chuckled his father.

"They're not going to put all of their eggs in one basket on our border are they?" asked Bobby in surprise.

"Not all, no," Horakova told him. "Our information is that they presently plan to conduct a significant demographic and economic re-concentration of the means of production and assets out of areas which may be threatened by what they euphemistically call urban disorder."

"Re-concentration to where?" asked Bobby. "Jefferson County, Montana?"

"Actually, only about twenty percent of the CPZ investment will be taking place along the border, here or in Canada," said Tom. "Eighty percent of these resources—pretty much the last resources America has—will be invested within the New England Union and up into the Green Zones in the Canadian Maritimes, which are still mostly white. They're highly Jewish as well, given all the Israelis who fled to Canada after the Light Unto The Nations deflated like a whoopee cushion, but the Green Zones in Hamilton, St. Johns, Moncton, Halifax and Prince Edward Island are still livable, viable, and have the necessary plant and infrastructure for manufacturing."

"But the NAR border gets twenty percent of all these goodies Burlington is passing around?" queried Bobby.

"Correct," affirmed Tom. "From northern Colorado on up into Alberta. If all goes as projected, within ten years' time, the American and Canadian demilitarized zone will be home to a population of almost thirty million people. Assuming that population to be eighty-five percent Caucasian, which appears to be the plan, that would mean that a little under half of the white population of the North American

continent outside the Republic will live within a hundred miles of the border."

"I'm sorry, that still doesn't make sense to me," said Bobby.

"Think about it," said his father with a wry smile. "It's actually damned brilliant. What happens when there is a major mud-spill from the cities—that's when, not if—and the muds realize there is food and liquor and electricity and white women in the demilitarized zone, and they start moving westward in a massive swarm toward East Montana? Or toward western South Dakota, or Nebraska, or northern Colorado along the Wyoming border? Or western Saskatchewan?"

"We would have to intervene," said Bobby without hesitation. "We obviously can't have millions of niggers and cholos slumping towards our country with mayhem in mind. We would have to stop them, and stop them before they even arrived on the border . . ." Bobby's eyes widened in sudden comprehension.

"By George, I think he's got it!" shouted Tom in his best Henry Higgins imitation, flipping the top off another bottle of Red Hook.

"Those sons-of-bitches!" gasped Bobby, laughing out loud at the sheer effrontery of it. "They've moving their good stuff and people here to shelter under the guns of the Northmen! They know they don't have the means or the balls to mow down wave after wave of marching monkoids, but we do! Those liberal turds plan on conning us into doing their dirty work for them, and then they can scream and sob and wail about wicked evil racists hurting and oppressing the poor little dark people, like they always do! Hell, they may even work it up into another so-called Holocaust!"

"They do seem to be finally getting to know us," said Big Bob with a chuckle. "In any case, if there is a really big and bloody mud-spill, we would have to do something about the widespread devastation such an event would cause to the white Americans in their path, liberal or neo-conservative dumb-asses though they be. The whole purpose of the Northwest American Republic is to secure the existence of our people and a future for white children. Most people think that we serve that function simply by existing as a Homeland for our people, and of course that's the primary way we fulfill the Fourteen Words, but whenever and wherever white people are in physical danger, then we have to act

as their protector if there is any way possible we can do so. That's why we spent all those years getting the last whites out of France and South Africa."

"Yeah, I saw *Mooney's List*," said Tom with a smile. "Great flick. But wait, there is more! Let's pick an example. Say this new warlord Kamal Mohammed in Minneapolis decides to chimp out, and he and his *jihadis* go charging through the north woods murdering and raping and desecrating churches in the name of Allah and so forth. There would presumably be some resistance—even those insipid Minnesota Swedes aren't that far gone—but it's not enough. Local forces aren't strong enough to fight the niggers off, and the United States government simply stands by wringing its hands, as they have always done when white Americans have been butchered and victimized by blacks. So the NDF rolls in and whips Kamal and his fuzzy-wuzzies down to a greasy spot. What's to prevent us nasty Northmen from sticking around and annexing the Dakotas and Minnesota?"

"Okay. What *would* stop us from doing that?" asked Bobby slowly. "And if the opportunity offers, shouldn't we take that chance?"

"The Political Bureau has been debating that topic for years and will probably keep on debating it for years more," replied Tom. "It's become much more of a front-burner type discussion since this CPZ thing came up, and there's now a risk of escalating tensions on our American and Canadian borders which might someday provide that very kind of opportunity. You an Expansionist or a Pragmatist, young Robert?"

"I never thought about politics in that way," said Bobby.

"You're a Party member and a first class citizen," his father reminded him. "It's your duty to think about politics."

"Look, thanks for being too polite to mention the fact, but we all know I'm only a first class because of Ally," replied Bobby ruefully. "Can't have the Daughter of the Nation's hubby a mere second, or even a grubby third like some kid just out of his national service, can we?"

"Oh, rubbish," said his father. "Even if you weren't married to Allura you would have gotten your second by now, and your first if you'd really cracked in on it. You're what, now, thirty-three? Anybody can apply or be recommended for first class citizenship after age thirty."

Bobby shrugged. "Anyway, to answer your question, I know there's only one Party and we can't allow factions and disunity and so on . . ."

"Fine, we'll take all that as read," said Tom with a smile.

Bobby furrowed his brow. "I can see the point in President Brennan's Pragmatism during the early years of the country's history, when things were a lot more precarious than they are now, when the very existence of our country was in doubt, and every day in which the sun set on that Tricolor flag still up there in the sky was a day of victory. I also know that we exist primarily as a Homeland to provide physical and moral safety for our people the world over. There has to be some place on earth where white people can live, and work, and keep what they earn, in order to marry and raise children, without the fear of themselves or their kids being slaughtered by black beasts, and maintaining that someplace in existence has to trump pretty much everything else. To answer your question, I suppose I'm one of the many people in the Republic who have the idea somewhere in the back of our heads that one day we'll be strong enough to kick the door in and take it all back, all of the America that was once ours."

"That old sea-to-shining-sea dream, the old Manifest Destiny thing that first brought Lewis and Clark to our country. Little did they know. It dies hard in all of us," said his father with a quiet nod.

"And with all due respect to the late President Morehouse, who I understand was a truly great man and whose leadership saved us, I *damned* well think we should have gotten more out of the Seven Weeks War than we did!" Bobby concluded.

"So do a lot of people. Northern California and most of western Canada wasn't enough?" asked his father, amused.

"Not enough to justify me and Ida being made to hide off in the woods for all that time. Not enough for them to pay for making my mom afraid," said Bobby Three with a scowl.

"I always understood Millie held up really well in the EFPS retreat?" replied Tom in some surprise.

"Yes, Jenny always said Millie was an absolute rock, the greatest help she had during the whole time," said his father.

"She was afraid for you," Bobby Three told his father. "We all were. Remember, we had no idea where the hell you were or what had happened to you."

"Ah," replied Big Bob. "Yes."

"I remember that much, and no, for that it's not enough," Bobby Three went on. "I think we should have demanded Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Utah and the rest of Montana and both Dakotas, and every damned majority white state west of the Mississippi," said Bobby Three. "And we should have grabbed Alaska too."

"Their people voted for independence, Red Morehouse promised we'd respect their decision, and we have. We have good relations with the Sourdoughs, and sometimes good friends are better than fellow citizens who are nursing a grudge because they think they were forced into something they didn't want," his father replied.

"Mmm, yes, it's the old argument," said Tom with a sober nod. "Morehouse didn't think we could hold any more than we took. I happen to think he was right, but others have disagreed ever since."

"Could we wander back in the general direction of the topic at hand?" asked Bobby. "I'd like to go tuck my girls in before they fall asleep."

"Okay, all of this is long-term, big picture stuff," said Tom. "The Political Bureau has looked carefully at this CPZ on the border thing, and on the whole they are cautiously favorable, not least because events may give our country reason to intervene in the future, and maybe grab back some more of North America from the hebes. We like the idea of more white people on our border, because we believe that over the years a kind of melding will be possible. Perhaps they think they will corrupt us with their luxury and their hedonism, the old American Dream. That only works on white people who don't understand who and what is behind it and what signs to look for. We have faith in the equally corrupting effect of the Iron Dream on them. What we cannot have and won't allow, insofar as we can counteract it, is the presence of racial enemies on our border and a general remilitarization. They are going to claim they have to bring back the goons in the body armor to protect their newly prosperous communities from so-called urban unrest, meaning the niggers breaking out of their pens. That's certainly

true as far as it goes. A good chunk of the world's last reserves of white talent, white assets, and white females of child-bearing age are going to need protecting, but that's what we created the Republic for. Our long term goal, Bobby, is to get the people who migrate to these new border zones to start looking northwest, not east, and not just for security. We need to make sure the population of these CPZs are as white as possible and that overt racial enemies are kept out of positions of actual power."

"This business over in Boulder looks like some kind or test case or probe," said Big Bob. "The ERA's projected Prosperity Zone is being placed in the charge of this Martine woman, who is negroid and whose presence is clearly a deliberate provocation. She is also bringing as ill-disguised aides and advisers at least one officer from the New Model Army, and at least two individuals who, whatever their cover says, are from the FBI. We can't allow them to get a permanent foothold Over There. Plus there is the consideration that in order for these white people to get what they want from their government, they will have to defer to a negress and concede power over their lives to her, which is what the Republic cannot allow as a matter of moral conscience. Not anywhere, not any time, if there is anything at all we can do about it. The destiny of the white race is ours alone to decide."

"White men don't take orders from she-boons," said Bobby Three. "Yeah, I get that. But what exactly do we do about it? Just go across the border and whack them all?"

"A little more subtle than that," Tom told him. "Actually, a *lot* more subtle than that. I'm not sure yet what we're going to do about the situation. We need to see how it plays out. We need to find some way to remove the undesirables from the scene while not throwing a monkey wrench into the CPZ project as a whole. We need to make it clear to Burlington that while this CPZ on the border scheme is tentatively acceptable to the Republic, in view of the many good things it will bring to white people, it is to be a conspicuously white endeavor from the get-go," Tom told him.

Colonel Campbell spoke up. "Community Prosperity for Jefferson County, *si*. Negresses in Power Womyn suits, FBI agents and mercenaries, non-white labor, Jews calling the shots from behind the curtain, no.

Okay, we understand this is a big chain of events and that's not going to be possible all the time. We are at the beginning of what will most likely become the longest and most complex geopolitical and intelligence game the Northwest Republic has ever played, and we're still scoping out the board."

"What do you need me to do, Dad?" asked Bobby Three.

"We need you to run point on the intelligence angle, at least openly. They'll expect the local Guard to be curious about what's going on and they won't be surprised at your interest. Hopefully we can keep them in the dark about just how interested we are, and you can allow your Uncle Tom to remain in the background for now. You met with your opposite number over there in Boulder, yet?" asked Campbell the elder.

"Sheriff Lomax? No," said Bobby. "I've got the hotline phone, but I haven't used it so far, and neither has he. In my briefing with Captain McOwen when I took over, he recommended I not make the first approach or ask for a meet unless something came up and there was a real need to do so. McOwen got to know Lomax pretty well when he was in command here. He says Lomax is somebody we can work with so long as we always play it straight with him. But he likes his space, and he's suspicious of anything to do with us, which I suppose anybody who grew up on the border would be. If Lomax thinks we're trying to pump him for information or use him in any way, he'll probably cut me off and toss the hotline phone in the garbage."

"Hmmm, that will make it difficult, since that *is* kind of what we want you to do," ruminated Big Bob. "Anything on your plate that might need any cross-border law enforcement liaison any time soon?"

"One of our local boys just out of the army is paying his attentions to a girl from Over The Road," said Bobby Three. "She's the granddaughter of a real bitter-ender Union vet who's still fighting the first war and who's threatening to shoot our fellow on sight, plus Johnny is a blockade runner who regularly cruises through Jefferson County at a high rate of knots, so there might be some kind of incident building there. Other than that, no, I can't think of anything. I've got some snitches Over There that McOwen passed on to me, but they're on piece-work rates. I'll see what I can find out about this nigger and her entourage, but you may have to up my intelligence budget. They'll take credits,

but they prefer New American. You'll have to have a word with the Northwest Bank branch manager to raise the station's foreign currency allowance."

"I'll ship you the money direct via government mail, in case somebody at the bank is also in the free-lance snitching business," said Tom. "I'll get you a thousand NA bucks in tens and twenties this week to start with, after that you'll need to give me something itemized."

Allura stuck her head out the door. "Whatever you three are involved in, it will have to wait," she commanded. "Story time for two little girls." Bobby Three got up.

"Sorry," he told them. "Priority call."

XXXIII

Whom The Gods Would Destroy

(40 Years, ten months and five days after Longview)

Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.
—Ancient Greek Proverb

Several days later, with bright morning sunshine streaming though the windows of the town hall meeting chamber, the Boulder town council and the Jefferson County commissioners convened a special closed session, where they sat in a growing panic. They listened to the Economic Recovery Administration's special undersecretary for development in Montana describe in rosy hues, complete with a PowerPoint presentation, all the manufacturing and research facilities the U.S. government and its various agencies wanted to build in no less than four special new industrial parks around the county. The construction alone would bring in enough money to put the county back on its feet for years to come, and update every facility and piece of equipment that hadn't been upgraded for decades. This in turn would lead to the influx of at least ten thousand highly paid new residents within the next two years, all of whom would need housing and feeding and clothing, to the immense profit of the existing townsfolk.

They were being offered an economic boom that would change the life of everyone on the eastern side of the Border Highway forever. It all looked to be aboveboard. Millions of New American Dollars were about to come cascading down into Boulder like a modern-day Comstock Lode, along with a number of armed men and racial minorities whose presence would almost certainly provoke violent confrontations with

the Northwest American Republic. The price of the boom was a return to living in a war zone, which many of the listeners remembered from their youth, not fondly. So far, so good. At least the city and county fathers had been prepared for that, and they thought they understood where the thorns in the bouquet of roses were hidden. Then this Womyn of Color proceeded to spiral off into sheer madness.

Gabrielle Martine was a tall and elegant negress, very black. Like generations of so-called African-American professional women she strove to come across as white as she could without actually bleaching her skin like the ancient freak Michael Jackson, although some went that extra mile as well. She had permanently straightened and softened the shiny ebony hair on her nappy head, from steel wool down into a lacquered-looking mop, in the chemical procedure called a "conk." Liposuction had thinned her bubble lips and reduced her massive buttocks, while surgery had narrowed her shovel nose until it was almost aquiline. She'd had sinus implants that altered the sound of her voice and gotten rid of the deep nasal resonance which was the biological hallmark of black people, so that she not only talked white, she *sounded* white. She was dressed to the nines in a Power Womyn suit and doused in perfume to stifle her acrid negroid body odor, which was the one thing that American cosmetic science had yet to find a work-around for. As usual, the perfume was only partially successful.

Gabi was accompanied from Burlington, USAC, (United States Administration Center) by three men and one woman. Her primary aide and gofer was a tired and harried-looking white man in his early fifties, wearing a rumpled suit and carrying a battered bureaucrat's briefcase, named Brandon Blackwell. Blackwell was some kind of lifelong civil service drone from Burlington, the white guy who in the traditional American arrangement, did all his nigger boss's actual work and made sure his superior did not fall flat on his or her monkey-face.

Two low-key FBI agents stood unobtrusively to Gabi Martine's rear during her presentation, guns discreetly concealed under flawlessly tailored jackets. One was a large white male of the buzz-cut, Judæo-Christian football player type from American Texas named Earl Hornbuckle. The American ruling class had long ago realized that there were certain advantages to allowing a small number of white people to

remain mentally frozen in the era of Pat Boone and Ronald Reagan, like flies in amber. Protestant evangelicals who deeply and sincerely believed that Jews were the apple of God's eye, and to criticize or argue with them was blasphemy, had for years made up the battering edge of spies, torturers, secret policemen and federal leg-breakers in the United States. Hornbuckle was part of this tradition, he knew it, and he was even proud of the fact.

Agent Mona James was a brown woman of the indeterminate racial category known as a *hapa*. Hapas, or Pacific mestizos, had been a growing West Coast phenomenon in the two generations before the Northwest War of Independence. They were usually some kind of Pacific Islander-Filipino mix, but their bloodlines often contained dollops of white, black, Chinese or Indochinese, Polynesian, and maybe a little exotic who-knows-what like Malay or Tongan or Samoan. During the Northwest War of Independence the hapas had been killed by the NVA or driven out of the Homeland, most of them southward to California. Then after the formation of Aztlan in the years after Longview, hapas had to go on the run again, when many more were killed and most of the rest driven eastward by the Aztec régime in the name of *limpezia de sangre de la Raza*. In theory, anyone who wanted to could live in Aztlan, so long as they learned Spanish and paid lip service to "diversity." This diversity existed only in flowery official phrases: in actual practice, it meant brown supremacy. Anyone other than a Hispanic mestizo who tried to live there was a third-class citizen and had rocks in his head. A small number of gringos were grudgingly tolerated as technocrats to keep the electric power more or less running, keep the TV on the air, keep the cell towers functioning most of the time, and fix the *jefes'* cars and air conditioners and other toys. In this, Aztlan was typical of most of the rest of Latin America for the past several centuries. Non-mestizo brown or yellow minorities in Aztlan were marginalized, persecuted, and murdered.

Mona James's skin was the color of coffee with one creamer, just a little too muddy to be acceptable to the Aztecs who prided themselves in being almost orange. Along with her Anglo surname, this had been reason enough for her to leave Los Angeles at a young age. She was in her early thirties now, and she didn't look too bad. Like her boss, Mona kept

her long black hair straight as a sheaf of arrows and done up into a severe bun. Her nose and lips were either surgically or naturally thin enough to avoid the primate-like physiognomy of her negro ancestors, be they from Alabama or Tonga (she didn't know herself). Her diction was devoid of accent, and her conversation, when she spoke, demonstrated actual cognitive faculties that Gabi lacked, which was Mona's white chromosomes kicking in.

The two federal agents were officially "security aides." Mona's negro boss couldn't think, her Caucasian partner had never been taught how, Brandon Blackwell was white and male and old and therefore not sufficiently politically sound to be entrusted with the details, and the British mercenary Colonel Malcolm Hart of the New Model Army was attached to the group with another remit altogether and not part of the central effort. Ergo, Mona James was the one actually in charge of the team's mission, which she had to accomplish without Gabi Martine figuring out the fact.

Not that Gabi didn't have the rap down well. One ability she did possess was a good memory, souped-up by special medications designed to stimulate her cortical synapses. These had been used by the black upper class for decades, even before the War of Independence. They were standard prescription for senior African-American government personnel or celebrities who had to appear in public or in front of the media. Known officially as "cognition enhancement aids" and unofficially as "smart nigger pills," they were basically massive Vitamin B and Omega 3 supplements laced with the nootropic dopamines L-Tyrosine and Biopterin, as well as a healthy shot of Aricept to increase oxygen flow to the brain temporarily. What this cocktail did was for a short time increase the number of brain synapses that were actually firing and increase NMA (Neuron Memory Allocation), so that a negro could remember more of his or her pre-learned knowledge more quickly, and within the limited parameters of that programming respond more immediately and spontaneously. This meant that with the help of cognition aid medication, someone like Gabi Martine could actually conduct what might pass for an intelligent conversation, as long as it didn't last too long or stray outside the knowledge and talking points that had been carefully drummed into her. The little blue pills made

blacks *seem* smarter, and it was part of Agent Mona James' job to make sure that Gabi always took her smart pills.

Now the men listening to Gabi were stunned at what they were hearing. She had been going on and on about the need to repair Jefferson County's roads and install the electronic grids in the asphalt to make most of them levitation-capable for the incoming yuppies' private cars, and then she had slid into something about "constructive engagement" with the Northwest Republic.

"Uh, wait a minute, Ms. Martine," spoke up Shep Akins. "Say what?"

"We believe in a policy of constructive engagement as a form of conflict resolution," Gabi prattled on, her immense white teeth gleaming as her mouth moved. "This is how South Africa was gradually moved away from the evil of apartheid late in the last century. Let me be blunt, ladies and gentlemen: in view of the failure of the military option some years ago, it is clear that we have to use a multi-layered and multi-disciplinary approach to the problem posed by the final eradication of racism in the world. These people in the racist entity have to be shown the error of their ways, in a manner of speaking, but it has to be done very gently to avoid inappropriate responses on their part. We have to explain to them in simple terms they can understand how and why they are so wrong. We must appeal to their better natures, along with offering them a share in our new prosperity, of course. We must establish little islands or beachheads of tolerance, one racist at a time. I am looking forward to beginning this process with my own initial meeting with the civil authorities in the racist entity. Do you realize most of them have never even personally met a person of color?"

"*What?*" said Sheriff Ben Lomax. He wasn't sure he had heard correctly.

"Oh, didn't I mention it?" said Gabi brightly from the podium. "I'm sorry; it must have slipped my mind. My husband and I are going to be among the first new residents of Boulder so that I can personally supervise and become involved in every aspect of creating the Prosperity Zone. We'll be coming out permanently next month, and I must say I am really looking forward to living in this beautiful part of the United States. I know Joseph and the kids will love it here."

"Uh, okay," replied Lomax, bemused, "but what was that you said about *meeting* with the civil authorities in what you call the racist entity? First off, may I ask what civil authorities you refer to?"

"Well, I'll meet with whoever's in charge over there as necessary to solve whatever issues come up," said Gabi, waving her hand vaguely.

The locals stared at one another, dumbfounded. Mayor Jay Gavin stood up. "Ah, ma'am, if I might ask, what exactly have you been told by those folks in Burlington about how things actually work Over The Road? About how their society is organized?"

"Surely they have some kind of local government!" exclaimed Gabi.

"You didn't bother to *find out* before you came out here?" asked Monty Sanderson, stunned.

Mayor Gavin sighed. "Ma'am, right now things in the western part of Montana are kind of like they were back a hundred and fifty years ago. Not much government, and what there is of it is mostly local. It's true that the larger cities like Missoula and Kalispell and towns like Northwest Helena and Northwest Butte have city councils and mayors. Those are voted in every six years in one big election, their national election for all offices from their president on down, by the people who have earned citizenship and the right to vote through service in the military or otherwise, sometimes in the case of women by having wh—by having children." Gavin had almost said "white children." The days when a white male could be arrested and imprisoned for so much as mentioning race at all were gone, but it still wasn't the done thing. "There's a sheriff for each of their counties, but the sheriff is a civil official and not a law enforcement officer like here. Over There the sheriff is an administrator who runs the government's business for the county. I seem to recall hearing somewhere they got that idea from the Middle Ages in England, which is what sheriffs originally were. But that doesn't apply on this part of the border. Jefferson County was always a rural area, and outside the cities in the Northwest—in the racist entity, the fact is that there is very little government of any kind."

"Well, I'll meet with this sheriff, then," said Gabi Martine impatiently.

Mayor Gavin went on. "There isn't one Over There, at least not for the immediate area. They've created the Montana Border District, which runs about thirty miles or so westward from Interstate 15, except for the city limits of some of the divided towns like Helena and Butte. It dates from the time when we had those fucking kooks—sorry, those liberation fighters over here on our side who used to go into the Republic, I mean the entity, and plant land mines and murder people and kill their cattle and that kind of thing. The Border District is essentially an eminent domain setup wherein the NDF and the Civil Guards, that's their police force, can go anywhere and can search private property at will in order to deal with anybody who comes across the border looking for trouble. In the rest of the Rep—oh, screw the 'entity' crap, in the rest of the *Republic*, the police and the military need a search warrant or permission from the owner to go on private property, except for the Bureau of State Security. Those guys can go anywhere and do anything they want, but there aren't very many of them, and nobody ever sees them unless they're doing something they shouldn't be doing. In the Border District the cops and the army can go on private land when they have to in the course of a pursuit or setting up an ambush for anybody they think might be coming across the border to do harm, their helicopters and levitating cars can fly over people's property looking for trespassers and also to pick up white people who cross the border fleeing from this country and into the Republic."

"That's illegal," pointed out Gabi Martine archly.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Gavin in a tired voice.

"Obviously that's one of the things I need to talk to these local authorities on their side about," she said. "We need to persuade them to accept the rule of law."

"Their law says *you* can't set foot on their turf without getting your fool head blown off!" snorted Monty Sanderson.

Gavin resumed hastily, "Anyway, Ms. Martine, what I'm getting at is that there *is* no real civil authority immediately on the other side of the Road from us, except I guess the commander of their Civil Guard post and any of their military that happens to be passing though. The town of Basin doesn't have a mayor or a council. There's only about four hundred people living there, and they decided they don't need one.

The town is run by a manager hired by the nearest sheriff outside the District, who I guess would be in Missoula, but he's just an employee. He deals with their utilities like Northwest Power and Light and runs the water and sewage treatment plant, but he doesn't have any political power. I think they have a circuit-riding judge who comes by every three or four months or so, to hear any pending legal cases, which I understand are usually convened in a local saloon, just like in the frontier days."

"Well, if you know your history, there were people of color around this part of the world in the frontier days, and now there's a woman of color with power here again," said Gabi with a silvery laugh. "The power of the purse, anyway. I'm a representative of the United States government, which they may not respect, but I am going to be bringing many millions of dollars into this area, which inevitably they will be getting a piece of. Money knows no borders, Mr. Gavin. You need to read up on your Ayn Rand. Anyway, I don't need to be meeting with any of my counterparts Over The Road yet, so we'll cross that bridge when we come to it."

After the meeting Jay Gavin, Ben Lomax, and Monty Sanderson cornered Brandon Blackwell in the office that Gabi and her team had been lent by the town council. "What the hell is going on, Blackwell?" demanded Monty Sanderson roughly. "First off, who and what are you, exactly, and what's your role in all this? Is this some kind of joke? Or has the U.S. government decided they want to provoke another war? You do realize, do you not, that this is *insane?* What fucking planet are you people *living* on, to come here and spout drivel like that?"

"What can I tell you?" replied Blackwell with a shrug. "I don't make policy. I'm just here to hold my power lady's briefcase and pick up her dry cleaning."

"Bullshit," said Sanderson.

"And keep track of the money, and her appointment book, and prepare her speeches and media briefings, and go over all her memos and whatnot from Burlington and make sure she has at least some vague understanding of what she's supposed to be doing here," admitted Blackwell.

"What does she *think* she's supposed to be doing here?" asked Lomax.

"Building a kind of Disneyland for her and all her friends so they can come here during the summer and watch the buffalo and ride horseys on a dude ranch?" Blackwell told them irritably. "Hell, *I* don't know! Look, I can tell you this: the CPZ is the real deal. The U.S.A. has got to step up its game economically or we've got about two dozen cities that are going to blow within the next few years because we're not able to keep their inhabitants fed and pacified any more. That's where most of you guys' beef and wheat is going to. That means we have to start optimizing our human resources, so to speak."

"Meaning you've got to move as much economic infrastructure as possible into the whitest remaining areas in the country so you can actually get some producing done without the whole kit and kaboodle being looted and burned down by rioting mud people when the cities blow," said Sanderson. Even the other two winced at his racial bluntness, but Blackwell didn't bat an eyelash.

"Pretty much, yeah. I agree, I think this constructive engagement idea is unlikely to work, but President Humperdinck and the cabinet want to try it."

"You can tell Rumpelstiltskin for me that he's flipped his pint-sized little lid," said Monty Sanderson. "And what the hell is the idea of bringing in New Model Army troops right up to the Road?"

"They won't be right up on the Road," said Blackwell. "There won't be any really big bases, at least not in this part of the CPZ. That's what Colonel Hart is here for. He'll be selecting locations and facilities for a whole long series of company-sized posts, old farmhouses and abandoned buildings of various kinds. That's the first of the CPZ cash you folks will actually see, when the NMA buys the land and starts building their barracks and whatnot. We're not looking to start any fights with that bunch Over The Road. The threat the NMA will be anticipating will be coming from the east."

"You think so? It's gonna get that bad, is it?" asked Lomax.

"When the rings around the cities are finally breached, and mass migrations of millions of people in search of food and resources start

to wander across the land?" replied Blackwell grimly. "Oh, yeah. You better believe it."

Later on in Mayor Gavin's office, the kitchen cabinet met in emergency session. "The first thing we have to do is stop that crazy nigger bitch from going Over The Road and knocking on people's doors," said Monty Sanderson. "Do you think that Blackwell guy would help? He at least seems to have his head screwed on straight."

"He also draws his paycheck from Burlington," said Gavin. "We need to be careful around him. Around all of them. Ben?"

"If they're going ahead with this craziness, we need to try and get ahead of it," said Lomax. "I suppose I'd better give that kid over in Basin a call. That new Civil Guard lieutenant in charge, the one who's married to President Wallace's assassin's daughter."

"Sounds like he'd be pretty well politically connected, then," suggested Sanderson.

"That's what I'm counting on, Monty," said Lomax with a nod. "I'm hoping that whatever I tell him will go straight on up the line to their power structure Over There. Maybe I can convince them it's not our doing and talk them out of hammering the hell out of Boulder and Jefferson County when they do whatever the hell they decide to do about this lunacy."

"Is that wise?" asked Gavin. "Why not let sleeping dogs lie until we have no choice left?"

"They won't be sleeping long when bulldozers and Mexican labor crews start coming in here, and besides, they probably know more already about what's going on than we do."

"How do you think the goots will react?" asked Jay Gavin.

"I won't try to guess, but I know it won't be pretty," replied Lomax.

* * *

"Bobby tell you he got a call on his hotline phone to meet with that Jefferson County sheriff tomorrow?" asked Colonel Robert Campbell. He and Major Tom Horakova were sitting in the bar at the guest house over steins of Rogue Brewery ale from Oregon.

"Yes," replied Tom. "Apparently this Lomax character didn't tell Bobby what it was about, just mentioned 'matters of mutual interest.' I was tempted to offer to go with him and sit in on the meet to give him some extra weight this first time, but I decided not to."

"Good," said Campbell with an approving nod. "You know he's got a bit of a complex about being Mister Allura Myers. He needs to show he can handle things on his own."

"You sure he can?" asked Tom.

"If I didn't think so, he wouldn't be here."

The two men met at noon the next day, in a designated spot right on the border that had been set up on the QT for that purpose, many years before. It was an ancient single-wide trailer that had been hauled into the right lane of Second Avenue going out of Boulder, dead-center under the old I-15 overpass. There were three entrances to the trailer, a door in each end, and one in the center which was never used due to the insuperable difficulties in protocol and the possibility that if it was used, an official of one government might inadvertently enter the other's country and cause mass hysteria in Olympia, Burlington, D.C., or all of the above. Bobby Three pulled up on the western end, and he and Corporal Mike Sweeney got out of their green Civil Guard squad car. The informal protocol that had grown up over the years required each participant to bring a witness to vouch for whatever was said, if necessary, and to make sure no secret deals were being plotted behind anyone's back. Sweeney had already attended several such conferences between Lomax and Bobby's predecessor, Captain McOwen. They left the squad car's green and blue LED lights flashing. Looking down the street, they saw a Jefferson County sheriff's car parked at the side of the road, its own blue and red lights flashing. They entered the trailer.

Lomax was already seated behind a large, battered wooden desk with a white line painted lengthwise down the middle, specially surveyed years ago, to mark the border between the two countries. He stood up when the two Guardsmen came in. Behind him stood a tall and lean deputy with a receding chin and large gray moustache that seemed to accentuate one another in counterpoint. "Good afternoon, gentlemen. I'm Sheriff Ben Lomax, Jefferson County, Montana. This is Lew Brumley," said Lomax, nodding back to his companion.

"Lieutenant Robert Campbell the Third, Basin station commander," replied Bobby. "I think you already know Corporal Mike Sweeney?"

"Yeah, I know Mike," replied Lomax.

"Hey, Ben," said Sweeney. "Hey, Lew. Heard you bagged yourself a moose last season."

"Yep," replied Brumley. "Eight-hundred-pound bull. Got the head and antlers on my wall and the steaks in my freezer." No one was so crass as to inquire as to how Sweeney knew about Brumley's moose.

Bobby eyed the white line painted down the center of the desk with curiosity. "Okay, what's the protocol here? If either of us sticks our hand over that line to shake with the other guy, is that some kind of incursion that's going to cause an international incident?"

"Best shake right over the line just to make sure," said Lomax. They suited the action to the word and sat down. "You'll note we have separate coffee-makers," said Lomax, pointing to the counter behind Bobby. "That way neither of us can accuse the other of poisoning him."

"That ever happened?" asked Bobby Three.

"Not here," said Lomax. "I heard some funny stories about what used to happen up in Great Falls some years back."

"I told him we had to bring our own," said Sweeney, going over to the coffeemaker and pulling a packet out of his pocket to start a brew. He then washed out two cups in the sink and dried them; they hadn't been used in some time and were dusty.

"So, sheriff, I hear you guys have some visitors from New England," said Bobby easily. "You want to talk about them, or about our two star-crossed lovers?"

"Mostly about our visitors, but while we're on the subject, any chance you can keep that randy Johnny Selkirk on your side of the Road?" asked Lomax. "I know the Tollivers. Wendell's all right, he's the kind of feller who gets along with everybody and thinks the past should stay in the past, but Danielle's mother Alice is a devout church lady of the traditional kind. She wouldn't think much of any man of twenty sniffing around her sixteen-year-old daughter, which I can't say I blame her for, and as to a Northman—well, she's fit to be tied. As far as Alice is concerned, you're every one of you Lucifer's minions on

earth. I understand she's thinking about sending Danny off to school in North Dakota somewhere to get her away from Johnny."

"That might solve the problem," agreed Bobby. "Trouble is, John Selkirk is also something of an import-export entrepreneur."

"I know it," said Lomax sourly. "When he's coming back from a run he likes to go through Boulder at ninety miles an hour on his final approach. He keeps on doing that shit and I catch him over here, I'm locking him up."

Bobby resisted the urge to bristle. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he said. "The point I was making is that Johnny's runs generally take him to Minneapolis or Milwaukee or Chicago, or at least the white suburbs thereof that are outside the Bremer walls and minefields. If he knew where Danny was in Dakota, he might stop by for a visit on his way back."

"The main problem is the grandfather, Elwood Tolliver," said Lomax. "He's been limping for forty years, and you can carry an awful lot of grudge on a bum leg for that long a time. Not to mention that the kid is the grandson of the man who made him that way. If he catches Johnny and Danny together, especially if it's *in flagrante delicto* so to speak, then depending on who can get to their gun faster, one of them's going to end up dead. I know you guys take a more laid-back view of a little casual personal bloodletting, but that's not the way it works in this part of Montana. We do things the old way. We're still part of the civilized world, and when somebody shoots somebody else, then the law steps in. No offense."

"None taken," replied Bobby with a laugh. Corporal Sweeney handed him a cup of black coffee. "Thanks, Mike. Actually, it's we who do things the old way, sheriff, or the older way, I guess you could say. But you're right. We're not civilized, not by your standards, and we sure as hell don't want to be. We were civilized for many generations, and it damned near killed us off. Look, I've spoken to both Hatcher and John both about this, and Johnny told me to mind my own business, which is his right. I'll talk to Captain Selkirk himself next time I see him, but I can tell you this much: the Selkirk family isn't any happier about this situation than the Tollivers, they've made that clear to Johnny, and beyond that there's not much I can do. We don't have restraining orders

and lawsuits and all that crap in the Republic. They are an offense to human dignity, and one of the reasons our ancestors did the old revolution trick forty years ago."

"Oliver Wendell Holmes said that the law is meant to be a shield, not a sword," Lomax reminded him.

"Oliver Wendell Holmes lived in a stable and orderly world run by educated white men with moral principles and consciences, where niggers weren't allowed to run wild like troops of baboons and where there were no Mexicans, no Somali warlords ruling American cities, no drugs, and no buggery," said Bobby. "In his world that was a noble sentiment, because they still had genuine freedom to counterbalance the law. The last of that world died in 1933 when a syphilitic cripple and his bull dyke wife seized the White House. I know, backlash never replays like the original, but in the Northwest Republic we've tried to bring the best of that world back, and I'm not just talking about the clothes. You know our motto in the Guards? I don't mean *Custodes Libertas,* the Latin one on our official seal. I mean the one in English, that hangs somewhere on the wall of every Guard station, including ours over in Basin?"

"Yeah, McOwen told me once," chuckled Lomax. "Something like 'It's not a problem until it's a problem.' That the one?"

"That's it," said Bobby with a smile. "That's our attitude. We're not there primarily to enforce the law, because there's not that much law to enforce. We are there to *maintain the state* in existence, which is really the purpose of every police force the world over and has been since the beginning. We're just more honest about it than most."

"Okay, all these philosophical digressions aside, what are we going to do if this Johnny and Danny situation blows up on us?" asked Lomax

"Hmmm . . . frankly I think it's more likely to *be* a blow-up if something happens on your side of the Road, what with all your laws and all," Bobby said. "I think we agree that the main thing is to keep Elwood Tolliver and Johnny Selkirk from having a close encounter. I gather the old man never comes over here, as a matter of principle. I know you can't become involved in helping an adolescent girl sneak out behind her family's back, but how's this? I'll talk to Selkirk and see if I

can persuade him to persuade Danny in turn to do all their socializing on our side, in Basin or maybe down in Northwest Butte."

"I don't think Elwood and Alice Tolliver are going to consider Danny running around in Butte with a boy four years older than she is much of a solution," said Lomax dryly.

"Then they can go ahead and send Danny off to school in Dakota," said Bobby. "She's their child. I'm just trying to avoid any bodies dropping over this. Besides, they're young. They may decide they're not meant to be and just break up, like kids do."

"And what if Danny ends up pregnant?" asked Lomax.

"Then John will shoulder his responsibility however the two families feel is appropriate," said Bobby. "That's the way we do things on our side of the Road."

"I have to admit, that's what I've heard," said Lomax with a nod. "Well, I guess we just have to see how it plays out. Now, about these visitors you mentioned . . ." Lomax sighed. "Where to begin, where to begin?"

"I know all about the Community Prosperity Zone thing," said Bobby Three.

"Of course you do."

"What I can't understand is why in God's name they sent a nigger, which is bad taste to say the least, and a couple of FBI agents, which is a flat-out violation of the Armistice of twenty-eight years ago, and then this merc from the New Model Army. The best I can figure is that for some reason having nothing to do with sanity, the rump U.S.A. régime has decided to spit right in the Republic's face and see what happens."

"I can tell you this much," said Lomax seriously. "We've had some pretty strong assurances over on our side that this whole Prosperity Zone thing is the real McCoy, and we want it, bad."

"So why not send some nice quiet, competent white bureaucrats to iron out the details and then start building all your factories and office buildings and fancy coffee shops and whatnot, using local contractors and labor?" asked Bobby. "East Montana's unemployment rate has been running at a steady nine percent for years, and the only reason it's not any higher is that all the young people leave the state as soon as they get their high school diplomas in their hands."

"That's why we want all these jobs and these new people," said Lomax.

"Even if some of them aren't the right kind of people from our point of view?" asked Bobby.

Lomax scowled. "Look, let me try and explain to you how it is. Back in our parents and grandparents' time, for the last three years or so of the Trouble, Jefferson County had a higher per capita homicide rate than Chicago or Miami, and we were only just behind Baltimore. And it wasn't criminals or drug addicts or stick-up men or hadjis in turbans, it was men and a few women who grew up not ten or twenty miles down the road from one another, who went to the same schools and the same churches and shopped in the same Mighty Marts all their lives, whose kids went to each other's birthday parties and who saw each other every day. Now all of a sudden these people were wiring up Semtex in their garages and putting on body armor and loading magazines with bullets so they could sneak up on one another in the dark and commit murder. And they committed a lot of damned murder. You're not from here, Lieutenant, not even from your side of the Road, so you don't know what that does to a small community of around ten thousand people who have intermarried so everybody's related, and who lived together for generations with not even much in the way of a cross word."

Bobby decided now was not the time to interrupt. Lomax went on. "Then forty years ago we lost half the county to you lot, thanks to that air-head with the big hair who was sitting in the Oval Office at the time. Some of us lost our homes and businesses, and above all we lost friends and family to that goddamned war. To this day there are parents and children, brothers and sisters, and every kind of cousin in the book who live not ten miles from one another and who have never met or spoken to one another in their entire lives, because of that horrible time. Then there was the second war, and those of us who do remember you, remember you only as invaders who came with tanks and weapons and who we had to run and hide from. Okay, fair enough, your General Drones was a good man, he promised no one would be harmed, and he kept his word, but we both know that war has no rules and that could have changed in a heartbeat if any American forces had come rolling down the road toward Boulder."

"I was very young during the Seven Weeks, and I have some bad memories, but nothing as bad as being occupied," said Bobby soberly. "Of course, I suspect that if the Americans had occupied Missoula, I would have some bad memories indeed, if I were still alive. Look, sheriff, I'm not going to argue or try to re-fight the War of Independence with you. I wasn't even born then, and for me to try and tell you how things were would be fatuous. All I can do is tell you what my aunt, my father's older sister Jenny and her husband Jason told me now and then down through the years on the few occasions we talked about it. They told me that they did what they did because *the world had to change*, that things had reached the point where that one thing was the overriding principle that had to govern every human action, if there was to be anything left for anyone. *The world had to change*, and there simply was no other way for that to happen than to fight. Every other way had been deliberately and maliciously blocked and closed off for years, by people who would say anything, do anything, commit any crime and any breach of decency, rather than surrender their power. That's what my aunt and her husband told me. They were there. They are both good and noble people, and I believe them. That's all I can say."

"Fair enough," said Lomax with a sigh. "It ain't like either of us will ever convince the other. But you need to understand that this is how the people in my county feel about you. Not all of them hate you, but they're all afraid of you and they're very suspicious of you. You're like a biting dog; even if it's only once every few decades. No one knows when you'll bite again or when someone will let you off your leash. Since the end of the second war, what's left of Jefferson has been a kind of ghost land, a kind of limbo. It's like we were cut off from the world. Nobody wants to live here because you people are just Across The Road and we don't know when some stupid mess here or somewhere else in the country will start up something that brings your soldiers and your Stukas. Now we have a chance to re-join the rest of the world, and not raise children just to send them east with a diploma in their hands when they turn eighteen."

"Why not send them west?" broke in Bobby, unable to resist. "There is every opportunity anyone could wish for in Missoula or

Seattle or Boise or anywhere between here and the Pacific. And it's their Homeland, after all."

Lomax chuckled. "Who says some of them don't go west? We just don't talk about them." He got serious again. "I didn't mean to go off on a tear like that, Lieutenant, but I mean it. We want this new life for our homeland, small h, and if some of the people who come here to help us build that new life have brown or yellow or even black skins, we don't care. You do, and I reckon that's going to be a problem."

"Oh, you'll come to care all right," said Bobby with a sigh. "Thanks to us, these creatures of the night have stayed away from Jefferson County for two generations, and you've forgotten what it's like to be around them. I suspect you'll remember soon enough, to your cost. Anyway, at some point it's clear these ERA people and their FBI and mercenary handmaidens intend to start something. I'm curious as to what, and as to how you think . . ."

"They already have," interrupted Lomax. "She wants to meet with you."

"Huh?" said Bobby. "Who wants to meet with me?"

"Deputy ERA director Gabrielle Martine. She wants to meet with you. Get to know you. Pursue constructive engagement with you," Lomax told him.

"But she's a nigger," said Bobby, uncomprehending.

"Yes, I know," said Lomax. "But she feels that despite your cultural and political differences, a frank exchange of views on the basis of common interest is possible. These are her words, now, bear in mind."

"What the hell is she talking about?" asked Bobby, puzzled. "I'm white. She's a nigger. We *have* no common interest."

"She evidently disagrees," said Lomax with a straight face. Bobby Three realized that Lomax was trying his best not to burst out laughing, but he was too bemused to be offended.

"What she agrees with or disagrees with is of no consequence to anybody or anything Over Here," he said, shaking his head, trying to wrap his mind around the whole absurd idea. "She's a nigger. She's a lower primate. Anything she says or thinks has nothing to do with

anything in the human world, any more than it matters what a goat or an orangutan thinks."

"I rather thought that would be your reaction," said Lomax, standing up. "You guys are nothing if not consistent on racial matters. I just thought I'd mention it to give you some idea of what you're going to be up against, is all."

"While we're on the subject, who *do* I talk to if it comes to that?" asked Bobby Three.

"You have the hotline phone to me, and if there's any reason to do so I can introduce you to Mayor Gavin and to a man named Monty Sanderson who's kind of the biggest wheel in the county, business and social-wise," said Lomax.

"Yes, the name is familiar to me," said Bobby with a nod. "Anybody white in the American team who might be approachable in some kind of real emergency?"

"Feller named Brandon Blackwell. Bureaucrat type, but not as stupid as he looks. He seems to be Gabi's minder," said Lomax. "For real, Lieutenant, do you have any official answer to Ms. Martine's request for a personal meeting?"

Bobby grinned. "Tell her my name isn't Doctor Doolittle, and I don't talk to the animals," he said.

XXXIV

Drunkards, Fools, And Children

(40 Years, ten months and 14 days after Longview)

The good Lord looks out for drunkards, fools, and children.
—Old Folk Saying

Danny was now firmly in the Tolliver family doghouse. She spent an entire day being hauled around the American side of Jefferson County by her grandfather, to the site of every atrocity committed by the NVA during the War of Independence. There Elwood regaled her with explicit blood-and-gore recountings of every bullet fired, every bomb detonated, every brutal punishment beating, and every family run out of the county never to return. When they got home that night, she was confronted by both her parents. Her father Wendell seemed more concerned for her than angry, but he and Alice were of one accord that her whatever-this-was had to stop. With Elwood acting as the third member of the inquisitorial tribunal, they demanded that she foreswear ever to see, speak to, or think about John Selkirk again, on pain of boarding school in North Dakota.

To her own surprise, she balked and refused to be browbeaten or intimidated. Rather than screaming and shouting, or otherwise engaging in teenaged girl-hysterics, she had gone stubborn and quiet and largely mute, except to say, "Mom, Dad, I'm not going to make you any promises I may not be able to keep. Yes, I lied to you about Johnny and me. That was wrong, and I'm sorry. All I can promise you is that I won't lie to you any more, and I won't do anything without telling you first. If you're going to send me away, then I guess you're

going to do it, but it won't change anything, and I think you should consider that decision very carefully, because it would be something I will never forget, or forgive. Yes, I get it, this is a problem and I may be in over my head. But it's *my* problem, and punishing me won't help." Her calm and quiet deliberation chilled the three adults' blood. She didn't realize it, but there was nothing she could have done that might have frightened them more.

The result was that Danny was permanently grounded. No outside activities except church or someplace else where she was in plain sight of a family member at all times. (Her younger brother Wade didn't count.) Her phone and computer privileges were taken away, as well as her driving and horseback privileges. Wade's phone was also taken away as a precaution "so your sister doesn't talk you into doing something you shouldn't," which made Danielle really popular with her brother. She was not even to go out onto the property to work unless one of the three adults accompanied her to whatever field or barn required something done. "You can't keep me under house arrest forever!" she snapped once at her grandfather, who was about to drive her out to help him run the hay-baler. "Do you think Johnny will just give up on me without a word of explanation?"

"No," agreed Elwood. "I wish he would. I hope he does, because then you'd see he isn't the young Lancelot you think he is. But I'm sorry to say, no, most likely he won't give up. When that Selkirk kid doesn't hear from you for a while, if he's really as stuck on you as you think, then he's going to come sniffing around here looking for you." Elwood opened a box he had placed on the kitchen table and drew out a gun belt and holster containing an old-fashioned custom stainless steel .357 Magnum with a five-inch barrel, Pachmayr grips and two speed-loaders Velcroed on the back of the belt, which he buckled on.

"What, you're going to shoot Johnny?" she demanded incredulously.

"Do you think I'm strapping this on as a joke, girl?" growled the old man. "Guess you didn't learn anything at all from our little talk the other day. Guns aren't funny, they're not props, and they're not for dramatic gestures. Yes, I will quite happily shoot anyone who threatens my family, especially one of those murdering beasts from Over the

Road!" Elwood's face seemed to twist with rage, but he kept a grip on himself. He drew the .357 from its holster and broke the cylinder. "I carried this gun in the PATUs, although even back then it was outdated. You know it's almost a hundred years old? That's the good thing about guns. You maintain 'em right, keep the rust and verdigris off them, keep the moving parts lightly oiled to seal out the air, and they'll still work for a century or more. Killed two racist spucky bastards with this gun. I reckon I'm good for a third if need be. You still don't understand how serious this is, do you?" He looked up at her. "I hope you don't have to find out, honey. Now let's go."

There were a few tense days wherein the details and logistics of enrolling Danielle in Fallbrook Academy were seriously examined, and the conclusion Alice and Wendell reached matched that of old Elwood. It could be done, but it would be a serious strain on the family's finances and on the operation of the ranch that would be better avoided, if there were some way to do so without Danny being carried off over the border by her lusty Aryan swain to be used as breeding stock for the next generation of Selkirks. Finally, her father and mother told her that she would be allowed to begin her senior year at Jefferson High, but when school started she would be driven there and picked up by either themselves or her grandfather. Then, to her horror, they invoked an almost-forgotten state law from 50 years before which allowed parents to place tracking bracelets on the ankles of "problem" minors. They applied to the family court judge in American Butte for an order to that effect, and got one, but the project fell through when it turned out that no one in Montana had any of the archaic bracelets left in stock, and the sheriff's department had long ago lost track of the necessary equipment to monitor such devices, nor did they any longer have personnel trained to operate such devices even if they could find it in the courthouse sub-basement, or wherever it had been gathering dust since before the Seven Weeks War.

It was a bad week for everyone.

* * *

Over the border, Johnny Selkirk wasn't having nearly as rough a time of it from his own family, but things were a bit tense. He wasn't too worried about Danny's immediate welfare, since in a small town like Boulder a family drama such as the Tollivers' was meat and drink to the local gossips. This meant that enterprising vendors of informational services in Jefferson County picked up on it, which in turn meant that Civil Guard Lieutenant Bobby Campbell in Basin with his freshly replenished snitch fund of New American dollars knew almost as soon as Danny herself did that while she would remain grounded, she wasn't headed for educational exile in Fargo. Bobby passed it on as a courtesy to John when they met one day in town, with a polite suggestion that he might want to let matters lie fallow for a while in the interest of not getting Danny into any more trouble. "You sneak over there and see her anyway, they might decide to re-assess that North Dakota option."

"You cops giving advice to the lovelorn now, Lieutenant?" asked Johnny.

"All part of the service, citizen," replied Campbell. "Seriously, it's not in anybody's interest for this to get out of hand. Her grandfather and maybe some others will probably pull down on you if they see you Over There, and somebody will get shot. That's a call I don't want to get from Sheriff Lomax on our little hotline. Add to that the fact that there's some strangers over there in Boulder with hidden agendas who might want to stir up trouble in aid of whatever the hell they're doing, which we haven't figured out yet. Plus there's the fact that if you really do like this girl, you could mess up her life real bad, John."

"I know it," Johnny replied with a sigh. "My dad and my grandfather have already given me stern talking-tos about my wicked and impolitic ways. For your information, Lieutenant, I think the wildest thing Danny and I ever did together was race my Pegasus in the stock car air show in Butte back in July. The way people talk, you'd think I'd descended on her farm with horse and foot, carried her off to my robber's den and chained her in a dungeon or something."

"Which would make her feel even worse, if trouble comes out of something genuinely innocent, when you two really *haven't* been doing anything wrong," replied Campbell soberly.

"Oh, I wouldn't say innocent," said Johnny, shaking his head. "Let's just say open and aboveboard."

John's grandfather, former NVA Captain Ray Selkirk, put it to him even more directly after dinner that night, out on the porch of the Selkirk ranch house six miles or so west of Wickes. Selkirk, a thin and wiry white-haired man with a permanent scowl and a nicotine-stained moustache who looked like he'd been weaned on a pickle, came out onto the porch with a bottle of Jack Daniels in his hand; Johnny and Hatch always made sure to replenish his supply when they were on their contraband-smuggling trips. "Here, take a slug of this," the old man ordered his grandson, handing him the bottle and lighting up one of his own long black cheroots. "You and me need to have a word or two or three, young man. You gonna marry that Tolliver girl?"

"Probably not," replied Johnny, drinking from the bottle.

"What do you mean, probably not?" demanded his grandfather.

"Meaning I haven't asked her yet, and even if I was so inclined, in order to ask her I'd have to be able to meet her and talk to her, and folks around here seem to have decided there's something wrong with that!" replied John with exasperation. "Her grandfather is threatening to shoot me if he sees me anywhere near her, or as near as I can figure if he sees me anywhere Over The Road. Ben Lomax is threatening to arrest me for traffic violations if I go Over There, that Guard lieutenant in Basin is giving me friendly advice not to try to see her which might not be so friendly next time, if it threatens to cause him bother, and you and Dad keep trying to ship me off to college. By the by, Danny's family is threatening to send her off to school too, in North Dakota."

"Do you *want* to marry her?" demanded Ray.

"I think I might, yeah," Johnny sighed. "If we could ever just spend some time together and concentrate on seeing if there's anything there, and not have to worry about who's gone see us, and whether there's gone be any political repercussions because of the fact that there's this strip of asphalt running through the ten miles between us."

"It's more than just a strip of asphalt, boy."

"Yes sir, I know, and I meant no disrespect," said Johnny. "But the Republic is supposed to be a Homeland for all white people, right? So why does that not include Danny Tolliver?"

"I understood what you meant," said old man Ray, swigging from the bottle. "One of the reasons we went through all that hell back then was to simplify life. Make things black and white, right and wrong again. I think we succeeded to a large degree, but them damned exceptions and shades of gray just keep on creeping into life no matter what."

"The Old Man used to say that shades of gray are where the Jew lies in wait to do harm," Johnny reminded.

"Good, you paid attention in school. So why not go pay attention in Kennewick A & M for two years and come back with a degree you can use to run this place better, or join the Engineers instead of just being a rifleman on your reserve call-ups? Something you can use to get your second-class citizenship?"

"And you figure two years in Kennewick will be enough to make me forget about Danny, or make her forget about me?" asked John.

"I don't know. Would it?" the old man asked.

"What have you got against her?" demanded Johnny. "She wasn't the one who sent Carol and the children to Nevada, that was that old bastard Elwood Tolliver! She wasn't even born when all that happened, and neither was I. Pop, you were a hero. I understand that, and I would never disparage what you and your men did for us all, any more than what Dad did in the Seven Weeks War. I just got out of the army myself, and if it happens again and needs to be done, I'll go over to Boulder in my gear with my X-4, although I hope and pray that day never comes. But this thing between you and Elwood Tolliver was forty years ago, Pop. Not my war. It has to end sometime. Why not now, with me and Danny!"

"Does Danielle feel the same way?" asked Ray morosely. "Does she want to marry *you*?"

"I don't know. Like I said, we've never really had the chance to sit down and talk calmly about it without somebody worrying at us or pressuring us."

"To answer your question, boy, I haven't got anything against her personally, although in view of who she's grown up around and that tub-thumping hoot-and-holler religion her family are into, I'm not expecting to be impressed."

"Not all Christians worship Jews," said Johnny.

"Well, we won't get into that," said the old man. "But there is one thing I want to make crystal clear to you. When you are with her, you damned well *will* remember who you are and who you represent, not just in the eyes of Danielle's family but in the eyes of everybody on the eastern side of that highway! You will treat that girl with the respect, courtesy, and gallantry that marks a real man. If you want her, then you stand up by her side and take her as your wife, like a real man does. If not, then you break it off clean and go find yourself a Northwest girl, or let your mom and dad or a matchmaker find one for you. You do not just play with her for a while and dump her. Elwood Tolliver's girl or not, Union or not, she is a white girl, and you were raised better than that. There's most likely going to be trouble over this, and when it comes I will *not* have it said that it happened because a grandson of mine comported himself in the manner of a nigger!"

"Don't worry, Pop, Danny's religious and I respect her faith more than you seem to. We've already settled that the hot and heavy stuff is on hold. I won't embarrass you," replied Johnny in a surly voice.

"That's not what I'm worried about," said the old man. "I'm worried that Elwood Tolliver may carry out his threat to kill you, and I'm going to have to go in there to that living room and tell your mother and your father that their son is dead, because forty years ago I started a job I didn't finish."

"Why didn't you?" asked Johnny. "Finish the job, I mean? Why did you just kneecap Tolliver?"

"Long story," said Ray.

* * *

On the afternoon of September the fifth, Ms. Gabrielle Martine of the Economic Recovery Administration decided that she was bored, so she would go visiting. She decided to visit Lieutenant Robert Campbell the Third in the Civil Guard Station in Basin, just drop in and say hello to the man she had come to view as her opposite number.

Why she decided to do this was difficult for anyone to understand. It might have been described as hubris in a white person, but in a black

it was not so complex as that: simple, childish stubbornness which demanded that Gabi do something she had been told not to do, precisely because she had been told not to do it, by white people. Repeatedly told, in fact. The big mystery was why she never understood that she would almost certainly be shot on sight the moment she set foot anywhere on the western side of Interstate 15. "I thought all American kids were taught in school that the Northmen are marauding ghouls who eat little black babies for breakfast?" commented Monty Sanderson later, when he heard what happened. "Hell, they probably *would*, too, if there were any little black babies Over There to eat. What in God's name was she thinking of?"

The subject had resurfaced on numerous occasions since the meeting where Gabi had first brought it up. Virtually everyone around her had attempted to explain, with varying degrees of politically correct circumlocution, that what she proposed to do was impossible, not to say insane. Brandon Blackwell told her, "In the first place, Gabrielle, I have to remind you that it is illegal for a United States citizen to enter the Northwest Republic under any circumstances without a travel permit. It has been illegal for forty years, and even today is still a serious offense that could have adverse effects on your career. To take even so much as a step towards that highway, you have to get authorization from the Office of Northwest Recovery or the Justice Department." (Thus the American government stubbornly maintained four decades of pretense that the NAR was a criminal matter, and not a political issue, certainly not a foreign policy one.)

"So I'll get a permit," said Gabi brightly. "You can take care of that for me, Brandon. Call Ayesha Jones at the ONR in Burlington, or if you can't get hold of Ayesha see if you can track down Julie Chan, I think she'll be in D.C. for the formal opening of Congress before she flies back to Burlington."

"If you insist, ma'am," said Blackwell, with a formal show of resignation. He then disregarded Gabi's command to try and obtain a permit, hoping her short attention span would kick in and she would forget about it. She didn't. For two days she pestered him on the subject of the permit, until Blackwell changed tack and did, in fact, submit a formal request on her behalf to the Office of Northwest Recovery

for a Northwest Exclusion Zone Entry and Travel Permit. (When the United States bureaucracy absolutely had to refer to the NAR in any formal way, it was either as "the racist entity" or the "exclusion zone.") Under "purpose of proposed visit" in the long form he had to fill out, he put "confer with Northwest police and military officers regarding future of region," which he figured would cause all kinds of bells and whistles to go off back in Burlington. That comment alone should be enough to get her recalled to Burlington and himself along with her. Maybe even get her sent to a punishment posting in Mississippi, where she would be forced to live only among her own kind, with no white servants. That was fine with Brandon Blackwell, so long as he didn't get transferred to the bizarre, all African-American "prosperity zone" in the deadly malarial Delta swamps along with her.

Gabi e-signed the application without a murmur and he duly sent it off, hoping that either the request would simply disappear into the bowels of the bureaucracy back in Burlington and no more would be heard of it, or else it would generate such consternation along the power corridors and in the cubbyholes of the ERA that even if Gabrielle weren't relieved and ordered home, she would at least be called on the carpet and commanded to stop rattling cages Across The Road before she woke up the animals. Either way, it should have been an end to this Meet-The-Gestapo madness.

Instead, after another two days, Blackwell came into the conference room in the Boulder Hot Springs Inn and Spa, an elegant hotel dating back to 1881 when it had been a watering hole for newly-wealthy silver rush millionaires, where the team had set up their headquarters. On the teleprinter he found a hard copy of Gabrielle Martine's duly signed and stamped travel permit into the Northwest Republic, good for six months and "multiple entries." There was no cover letter or accompanying comment of any kind, no acknowledgement of the fact that due to Ms. Martine's negritude there would be no multiple entries, only the first one, from which she would not return.

Blackwell was startled. It didn't make sense to him, and like all bureaucrats, when confronted with something that didn't make sense or looked dangerous, his first instinct was to kick the can on down the road and wash his hands of it. Knowing full well who was really in

charge, he went to find FBI Agent Mona James. He found her in one of the rooms hunched over a computer going over something on the screen with the British officer, Colonel Malcolm Hart, while Agent Hornbuckle sat at the round table between the bed and the rumbling air conditioner, reading the Bible. The two of them turned off the computer and closed the cover as Blackwell entered the room. He did not know what they were doing together, nor did he care. He tossed the permit to Mona. "Agent James, you're pretty well connected back in Burlington. Any idea who wants our boss dead?"

"Wait a minute, they *approved* it?" said Mona, stunned.

"As you see."

"Who signed it?" asked Mona, holding up the paper and examining it. "Simonetta Toledano from the ONR. She's an assistant director, so this comes from the top. She wouldn't sign it without Director Goldblum's okay."

"The chaps at ONR are presumably aware of the Republic's shoot-on-sight policy regarding dark pigmentation?" asked Hart. Like most real soldiers, he disdained the use of politically correct terminology.

"Of course," replied Mona.

"Then Brandon is quite right," replied the Colonel in his imperturbable Empire Club manner. "This has to be deliberate. Someone in Burlington wants Ms. Martine killed by Northmen, almost certainly in public when she tries to stretch out her hand in peace and good will, all that rot."

"Why?" asked Hornbuckle from across the room.

"Who knows?" replied Blackwell with a shrug. "I can't say I'm surprised. Nobody seems able to figure out why they sent a black woman on this assignment at all, other than to provoke the fascists into doing something violent."

"They're racists, not fascists," said Mona absently, looking at the paper in her hand and trying to think. "Not necessarily the same thing."

"Whatever," said Brandon with a shrug. "Maybe she's just a sacrificial lamb of some kind. Maybe she got inconvenient for somebody back in Burlington and they put this asinine constructive engagement idea in her head so she'd stick her head in the lion's mouth and get it bitten

off. Having the goots do it would give whoever it is plenty of plausible deniability." He carefully avoided looking at Hart, since he wasn't sure he understood why the Brit was along, either. "The question is, what do we do about it?" He looked pointedly at Mona.

"Uh, we don't have any secret orders to whack Gabi, do we?" asked Agent Hornbuckle. He understood that any such orders would have been given to Mona and not to him.

"We do not," said Mona firmly. "So far as I know, we really are here to protect her as well as assess the security and intelligence situation."

"Maybe somebody in Burlington is setting *us* up as well," said Hornbuckle with a frown. "A couple of FBI agents who die defending a woman of color from Nazi murderers would be great propaganda."

"If it were twenty-eight years ago and Hunter Wallace were still in power, I'd agree with you," said Mona thoughtfully. "I hear he tried something similar once with his own CIA director. But it's not. To the best of my knowledge, the government is quite serious about the constructive engagement thing. I think they want to make sure the Northwesters don't help themselves to any more land in North America when the major urban upheavals begin and the mass migrations from the city overwhelm much of what's left of the American infrastructure."

"So what do we do?" asked Blackwell again.

"Can you hide this document somewhere she can't get hold of it, until I can make some calls?" asked Mona.

"Sure, but she's going to get an email notification as well," replied Blackwell. "She may already know about it."

"You've got her password, don't you?" asked Mona. "Can't you get into her account and delete it?"

"I can try," said Blackwell. "Let me use that laptop." He sat down and in about thirty seconds he was into Gabrielle Martine's email folder. "Crap!" he exclaimed. "She's already opened it! She's probably heading for the office now to get the hard copy off the printer!"

"Okay, give it to her," said Mona with a sigh. "Tell her you were on your way to find her, but don't mention you stopped here first. We'll have to stall her while I make those calls to Burlington. We need to think up some kind of make-work for her to occupy herself with for a couple of days while I try to find out what the hell is going on."

Once she got the travel permit, Gabi wanted to immediately arrange an official visit to the Northwest Republic, joyfully conscious that she would be the first American official ever to do so, and a Womyn of Color at that. Blackwell called in Sheriff Ben Lomax to the ERA office for backup. When he heard what Gabi wanted to do, he pulled his .45 Peacemaker out of the holster and handed it to her. "Tell you what, ma'am, let's save everybody a lot of time. Take this. Cock the hammer back, then stick the barrel in your mouth, right up against your top palate, and pull the trigger. Yeah, it will make a mess for us to clean up, but this way at least we'll have a body to ship back to your family in Vermont or wherever. The Northmen will simply leave you out in some canyon for the buzzards."

"Sheriff, I appreciate your concern, but I really think it's misplaced," Gabi told him. "I know that the people in the Northwest racist entity have some very retrograde attitudes toward people of color, but how are we ever to change that if we never even sit down to discuss our differences? I'm not naïve. I don't expect to be welcomed with open arms, and I expect hostility. This Lieutenant Campbell may well refuse to meet me . . ."

"I told you, he already did," said Lomax. "In no uncertain terms." He had not thought it politic to repeat Bobby's Doctor Doolittle remark *verbatim*.

"Then if he won't come to me, I will have to go to him," explained Gabi patiently. "Yes, he may refuse to see me even when I go right up and knock on his door. I'm prepared for that. I know he has to follow his superiors' orders and his government's official policies, just like I do. I'm not asking him to sign a treaty or negotiate any kind of agreement, even an unofficial one. But that may come one day if people of good will on both sides of this terrible and artificial border can at least start treating one another like human beings. Is this Campbell fellow really so unrealistic? After all, he's willing to meet with you to resolve mutual problems, as you recently proved. Is he really so bigoted or restricted by his upbringing that he won't even meet with me at all or exchange a civil word?"

"Jesus Christ!" whispered Lomax, staring at her in amazement. "You really don't know, do you?" He looked at Blackwell. "How is this possible?" Blackwell just shrugged. Lomax turned back to Gabi.

"Let me spell this out for you, ma'am. I live here. You do not. I know these men from a lifetime of living beside them. You do not. This Northwest Civil Guard officer met with me, reluctantly, because I am white. It is not something either of us want to make a habit of. Campbell will not meet with you, not under any circumstances, nor will any of them ever address a word to you, civil or otherwise, because you are not white. You are *black*, and in their eyes you are an animal. They will not treat you like a human being, not ever. What part about *they will shoot you dead* is it that you do not understand? If you set foot across that road into their country, you will not stand a chance with those men, nor will anyone who goes with you. If you must commit suicide in this bizarre manner, please don't take anybody else with you. Your FBI agents are almost as badly hated as you are Over There, I'm sure your English mercenary friend has better sense, and nobody local here will go with you, not even crazy bitter-ender coots like Elwood Tolliver."

Gabi sat there stupefied at his outburst. Never before in her life had a white person ever spoken to her like this. The rules in America were clear: black and brown people alone could speak of race. Whites were allowed only to maintain a respectful silence, and then agree. Lomax had some hope he might finally have gotten through to her, and he decided to quit while he was ahead. He stood up and addressed Brandon Blackwell. "When she's gone, who takes over the ERA mission?" he asked. "You?"

"Not senior enough," said Blackwell. "They'll have to send somebody else out from Burlington."

"If you can't talk her out of it, go ahead and make the call," said Lomax. "This town still needs all that money and all those jobs. I think between myself and the other local community leaders we can convince the Northmen this wasn't anything we had a hand in. Just some crazy black lady trying to prove some kind of point nobody will ever understand." Lomax considered saying "nigger" but decided against it; the hatespeech laws were still on the books even if they were never enforced any longer, so no sense in completely wrong-footing himself. He turned and stalked out the door.

"Well, Gabi?" said Blackwell. "Should I make the call?"

"He's talking bullshit! The kind of virulent knee-jerk racism he's describing hasn't existed in this country for two hundred years!" she protested feebly.

"Over The Road is not this country any more, Gabi, and the kind of white men who live there haven't existed for two hundred years, either," Blackwell told her. "Extinct Tasmanian tigers aren't the only species the Northwest Republic has brought back from the dead."

* * *

Everyone thought they had talked Gabrielle Martine down from the ledge, but they were wrong. The more Gabi brooded over it all, the angrier and more stubborn and sullen she became. How *dare* they? Brandon, Lomax, the Northwest racists, they were all white, so how *dare* they tell her what to do? That wasn't supposed to happen. Did they not realize that she had come a long way, baby, that she was Moving On Up? The very idea that there was any place on earth reserved for white people and white people alone, someplace where she was not allowed to show her black face, began to obsess her even more than was usual with the "African-American managerial class," one of the many euphemisms used for several generations to describe the small handful of negroes who through some genetic quirk and generous dollops of affirmative action and preferential treatment, were of sufficient intelligence to be trainable to function on a nearly-white level.

Her whole attitude was a complete anachronism that had nothing to do with anything in the real world as it had existed for the past forty years, but it was by no means uncommon. Like many of her kind, and indeed like most of the American ruling élite, Gabi Martine was like a fly stuck in amber. In the Twilight Zone through which most of the shell-shocked American governing class staggered, the Northwest American Republic did not exist.

It *could* not exist. It was unthinkable, and whatever kind of tortuous doublethink that was required to work around the fact that the NAR did exist was embraced and practiced without hesitation. America consisted of fifty states, from sea to shining sea. It was all one, yet diverse *(e pluribus unum)*. The President of the United States was the

Leader of the Free World and the most powerful leader on the planet, even the one who had been stabbed through the eye with a pencil in the Oval Office just before he was about to destroy the continent in a fit of insanity. America's cities were not festering slums jammed tight with primitive savages about to explode if their EBT cards missed a payment. Oh, no, no, no, not at all. America's Designated Urban Zones were grand and glorious showcases of multicultural diversity which proved once and for all that all men and women were equal, for sure, for sure. There *was* no white country in the Pacific Northwest, ripped by force from the benevolent hands of the federal government by undefeated and indomitable armed force and courage. Oh, no, no, no, whatever gave anyone that idea? Such a thing would be an abomination, a paradox, a cosmic contradiction that would tear apart the very fabric of space and time and cause bloody rain and plagues of frogs. It could not be, so it was not.

Although seldom articulated, this was the thinking that had guided and dominated American policy for the past forty years, a manic refusal to accept the reality of what had happened at Longview. It permeated every aspect of American upper class society, where Gabrielle Martine had been raised as a dark child of privilege, she and her kind being required to maintain the all-important fiction of racial equality which was the central premise of all liberalism. She absorbed and internalized the comforting delusion that Longview, the Seven Weeks War, the Northwest space program and planetary colonies, the Northwest cancer cures, the return of the Tasmanian tiger, the imminent implosion of the old America when the non-white cities overflowed their razor wire perimeters and could no longer be contained—none of it was really happening. This was the glorious age when Hillary Clinton received her first presidential nomination from the Democratic convention, to the thunderous cheers and the mindless chanting and dancing of an endless macarena. Time had stopped on that night.

It therefore followed that no white racist would ever dare to actually *do* anything to Gabrielle Martine because her skin was black and she was in the wrong place. That sort of thing simply didn't happen any more. The idea was absurd. White folks knew better these days, in the United States anyway, and as to these people in the Northwest, they weren't

real. Something one saw on television as stereotype villains. They were some kind of cartoon characters.

So on the afternoon of September the fifth, brimming with self-confidence and three lunchtime martinis, tired of her FBI bodyguards' constant argument and refusal to accompany her on a sight-seeing tour of the NAR Border District, Gabi Martine hopped in her long and luxurious government-issue Lexus Model Twelve and rolled westward down Second Avenue, out of Boulder. She crossed under the Interstate Fifteen underpass where she noted the special trailer by the side of the road without realizing what it was. Since there was no formal border post, nor even a sign or a line painted on the asphalt, it took her a moment or two to realize that she was now in the racist entity itself. The GPS in her vehicle was not programmed to direct her to Basin, since such programming would have required an admission that Basin and the Northwest American Republic existed. But Gabi had a copy of an old map donated by the Jefferson County commissioners hanging on the wall of the office in the hotel, and she had memorized the route, so she barreled down what was still known as Old Depot Hill Road heading for her appointment with destiny. Imagine, the McCurtain finally breached by an African-American Womyn! She could see the opening credits of the movie that would be made about her rolling in her head as she drove.

It had never occurred to Agent Mona James that her ostensible boss would actually be so stupid as to simply get in a car and drive across the border on her own—what black person possibly could be so brainless?—but as a precaution Mona had tapped into the GPS trackers on all four staff vehicles and programmed them to send her an alarm on her phone if one of them crossed the interstate. She had just finished an afternoon quickie with Colonel Hart when her phone bleeped. She reached over, grabbed the phone from the nightstand, and swore. "Fuck! That crazy woman has crossed into the Exclusion Zone!"

"Gone walkabout, has she?" said Hart, sitting up and pulling on his underwear. "Well, that's going to be a sticky wicket. I suppose they really will kill her? Yes, of course they will. What do you plan to do about it?"

"I don't know what the hell I *can* do about it!" she snarled, leaping up and pulling on her clothes. "I can't go after her, because I'm almost as dark as she is. None of the locals will. You and Hornbuckle could try."

"Hornbuckle is an FBI agent, who is also therefore on these barbarians' shoot-on-sight list, white or not. I am an officer in the United States Army, or rather one of its subcontracting components. None of us, including you, is supposed to even be this close to the border. If any of us is killed or captured on their side of the Road, then there will be a barney almost as big as Madam Gabrielle getting it will cause. You're sure Burlington really wants to set up this industrial and economic zone here?"

"Yes, again, to the best of my knowledge," said Mona.

"Obviously somebody back there in maple syrup country doesn't want that to happen," said Hart crisply, buttoning his tunic and settling his beret jauntily on his head. "Hence the fact that this delegation has been led by a black nanny with cobblers for brains, whom the people who sent her had to know would do something exactly like this and get herself done in, thus causing enough hanna-hanna to scuttle the project. Who would want that?"

"The ONR itself was never happy with the idea," said Mona. "The current director, Goldblum, is a Jew and he gets apoplectic at anything even remotely suggesting normalization of relations. The ONR as a whole was enraged when they got demoted down from full cabinet status at the time of the move to Burlington, and they've been trying to get back up there ever since."

"I suspect that was because the American government was finally forced to admit that the Northwest isn't going to be recovered, and one doesn't need a full cabinet ministry to go through the empty motions and keep up appearances," commented Hart dryly. "At any rate, I think we can assume Gabi has gone the way of all dusky flesh west of here, or she's about to. What are you going to do? Go back to Burlington? I need at least a few more days here."

"Speaking of going through the motions, we need to at least look like we're doing so," replied Mona. She looked in the mirror to pin on her earrings, then flipped open her phone. "Hello, may I speak with

Sheriff Lomax, please? Agent Mona James. I need to speak to him right away. We have a problem."

Ten minutes later, while Mona, Hart, and Brandon Blackwell were in Lomax's office listening to the sheriff rant and curse, Gabi roared by a Northwest pickup truck going the other way coming out of Basin. In the truck were Basin town manager Leland Hauser and his wife. "That was an American car we just passed," said Hauser.

"How do you know?" asked Mrs. Hauser.

"It had license plates on it. We gave those up forty years ago," replied Hauser. "I could have sworn there was a female nigger driving it."

"Yeah, right," said his wife. "If you won't get corrective surgery, Lee, will you at least wear your glasses? Looks like you need 'em."

It was right at four o'clock in the afternoon when Gabrielle Martine pulled up in front of the Civil Guard station on Basin's one major street, appropriately enough called Main Street. She got out of the car and looked up at the flagpole on top of the old fire station, flying the Northwest Tricolor and the green and white Civil Guard flag beneath it. She was thrilled with a sense of history, history of her own making.

There was no one on the street; Basin was a tiny place, and it was a work day. Across the street and down a ways George Bassett, the bartender at the Four Deuces, opened the front doors of his establishment and hooked them back, leaving the traditional bat-wing doors swinging freely. He walked out with a push-broom to give the boardwalk a brush-down, then looked up and saw what appeared to be a tall black woman wearing an American-style business suit and skirt, standing in high heels in front of the Guard station. The suit was almost as unusual as the woman's skin color. Northwest women in this part of Montana wore the same long skirts and calico blouses and practical hats, bonnets, and boots as their great-great-grandmothers had worn, although the material was better and lighter. When they were riding or working they wore the same jeans and plaid shirts as men; the Ministry of Culture had long recognized that sartorial and fashion manipulation had limits. Bassett had only seen a woman in high heels on a few prior occasions; they weren't really infra dig for the mountains of Montana. He stared for a moment, then pulled his phone from his pocket and dialed 999.

"Civil Guard, Sergeant Boardman speaking," came the desk sergeant's voice.

"Hey, Joe. This is George. I'm out in front of the Deuces opening up. You got a nigger outside your station."

"Huh?" replied Sergeant Boardman.

"There's a big car with American plates parked outside your station, and there's a she-boon dressed like some kind of department-store dummy from Jew York at your door," said George. "Now she's coming inside."

Sergeant Joseph Boardman looked up and saw an elegant black woman striding confidently up to the duty desk. "Good afternoon, Sergeant," she said, flashing him a smile from huge white teeth. "Is Lieutenant Campbell in? I'd like to see him if he has a moment."

Boardman put down the phone and began to laugh, and then laugh uproariously. He wasn't sure who would be pulling a stunt like this or what it was in aid of. Presumably someone in the Guard pulling the leg of the new station boss. Maybe that Colonel from Missoula who was the Lieutenant's father, or some of his buddies with a sense of humor. Whoever it was, it was a great makeup job. Probably an actress from one of the movie or TV outfits; they could make up a white person so you'd swear he or she was black as the ace of spades, and the camera would make you believe it. "Sure, I'll call him!" the desk sergeant said, gasping with laughter. He picked up the phone and called up to Bobby's office. "Hey, Lieutenant, there's someone down here to see you!"

"Who?" asked Bobby upstairs.

Boardman could no longer resist. He started ooking and eeking and making monkey noises into the telephone, jumping up and down in his seat screaming like a chimpanzee. Gabi stared at him, not quite quick enough on the uptake to realize that the sergeant was describing her. Upstairs, Bobby stared at the phone in his hand with the monkey yells coming from it. "Boardman, are you drunk?" he snapped. He put down the phone and hurried downstairs.

When he entered the lobby he took one look at Gabi Martine, who was still staring at the sergeant-turned chimp, and he understood what had happened. "GOD *DAMN!*" he roared. He leaped forward and as Gabi was turning toward him, before she could say a word, he grabbed

her by her lacquered hair, pulled her off her feet, and slammed her face into the wall twice, hard, breaking several of her teeth and leaving smears of blood and mascara on the wall. He dragged her screaming and terrified down a small corridor, opened a maintenance closet, and threw her inside very hard. She went down with a crash of mop buckets and shelves. Bobby slammed the door and leaned over into the stairwell. *"Sweeney!"*

The corporal stuck his head over the balustrade. "Sir?"

"Go to my desk, top right hand drawer, get my gun and bring it down here!" Sweeney's face disappeared.

Sergeant Boardman appeared at his side. "Sir, that—that was an actual *nigger*? For real?"

"Yes, it's a real nigger!" shouted Bobby. "What the hell were you thinking, making a damned fool out of yourself?"

"I thought it was some kind of joke, sir," protested Boardman. "How the hell was I supposed to know? I've never seen one before, not a real one!"

"Couldn't you *smell* the damned thing under all that perfume?" Bobby heard moans and movement inside the closet. He went to the duty desk and pulled a long, heavy nightstick out from behind it. It was the only weapon the Basin Civil Guard ever actually used, and that only on rare occasions, to get the attention of rambunctious drunks who were too fuddled to understand what was being said to them. He walked back to the closet door just as it opened. He saw a bleeding black face looming in the darkness and he lashed at it savagely with the nightstick; it screamed and the door slammed shut again. Sweeney appeared breathlessly and handed Bobby his service pistol, a nine-millimeter chemical cartridge gun since smaller Guard detachments hadn't been issued the new Wilkerson kinetic discharge plate weapons yet. "Oh, I got this phone off your desk as well, sir," said the corporal. "It was ringing."

Bobby looked at it and saw a missed call. "Yeah, I imagine it was," he said. "That's the hotline phone. Wonder what Sheriff Lomax wants to talk about?" He stood there with his two fellow officers staring at him for ten seconds. His legal and constitutional duty regarding the contamination was clear, but he went ahead and called Lomax

back anyway, on the wild off-chance that there was some reasonable explanation. "Sheriff? Lieutenant Robert Campbell here."

"Thank you for returning my call, Lieutenant," said Lomax formally. "I'm afraid we have a problem."

"I'm aware of the problem, yes. Some of your livestock broke out of the pen. I've got the animal contained in our broom closet as we speak."

"Oh, Jesus!" muttered Lomax. "Is she alive?"

"Not for long."

"What happened? Did you find her out on the road somewhere?"

"No, she walked right into the police station and asked for me," said Bobby. "Is she on drugs, or is she just so bird-brained stupid she doesn't know who or what she is, where she is, or who we are?"

"I don't know about the drugs, but as to the rest, yeah, that pretty much says it all," said Lomax with a sigh. "Look, Lieutenant, I have some government people here with me, who expect me to speak some razzle-dazzle or pull some magic beans out of my pocket and make everything all right. I have tried to explain to them that I have no such magic beans, and that there exists something called the real world, but I'm not sure they get it any more than that pathetic creature in your broom closet does. One of them is making signs that he wants to talk to you."

"This is a human being we're talking about, right?" asked Bobby.

"Yes, he's white. Here he is."

A new voice came on the phone. "Hello, my name is Brandon Blackwell. Who am I speaking with?"

"This is Lieutenant Robert Campbell of the Northwest Civil Guard," said Bobby. There was a short but perceptible pause.

"You're the police officer who's married to Allura Myers, the lady known in your country as the Daughter of the Nation?" he asked, to Bobby's surprise.

"I'm used to my wife's fame preceding me in this country, but I was unaware we were known Out There," said Bobby. "Not sure I like the idea."

"Nothing sinister intended, Lieutenant, just a routine intelligence workup as part of our assignment," said Blackwell.

"Yeah, well, fair enough. I know who you are as well. You're this monkoid's white minder, right?"

"My official title is Ms. Martine's personal assistant, but yes, something like that. Sheriff Lomax had you on speaker, so I understand you have Gabrielle locked in a broom closet?"

"We don't need locks on our broom closets in this country, because absent niggers and Mexicans, who's going to steal janitorial supplies?" asked Bobby. "I have her in the closet, though, and I banged her nappy head a few times to settle her down."

"Are you going to kill her?" asked Blackwell bluntly.

"I'm required to do so by the Constitution," said Bobby. "Section One, Article Four, if memory serves."

"Yes, well, the letter of the law can be a bitch sometimes, I know, but Lieutenant, before you proceed, I'd just like to offer this for your consideration. You are not the only one who is puzzled and disturbed that Gabrielle was chosen to head a mission of this sensitivity. She is singularly unqualified for it. In fact, you might say she was almost guaranteed to make a dog's dinner of it."

"So who chose her, and why?"

"The who I'm honestly not sure of," Blackwell told him. "The why is I think because of the very reason that she *is* unqualified and so virtually certain to make a mess of things."

Behind the closet door, Gabi seemed to have recovered enough to realize she was being talked about on the phone. She began to pound on the door and scream incoherently to be released, with many muthafukkas. As with most of her kind, her quasi-white conditioning didn't hold up well under stress, and her diction was the first to go. "Go get some pepper spray," Bobby ordered Boardman. "Okay, so your government is run by idiots. We know this. Why should this cause me to be derelict in my duty to enforce the primary law of this country's very existence?"

"Unfortunately, my government is not only run by idiots, Lieutenant," said Blackwell. "It is run by some very nasty people who wish your country harm, some of whom don't want this Community Prosperity Zone set up anywhere near you, when there might arise some genuine constructive engagement between people of the same

race." Boardman returned with a red canister. Bobby gestured towards the door. The sergeant shoved it open, leaned in, and let fly with a long squirt from the mouth of the can. Gabi Martine's muthafukkas turned to screams. "After all, we might discover that neither of us are born with horns and pointed tails," Blackwell went on. He could surely hear Gabi's howls in the background, but he ignored them. "There are always those who profit by keeping hatred and mistrust alive, Lieutenant. I assume that they are responsible for this ghastly cock-up of sending Gabi out here, knowing full well that something like this would happen. Somebody *wants* you to kill her, Lieutenant, as part of some bizarre scheme or intrigue that might lead to something a lot worse than the death of one bureaucrat, or one monkoid if you prefer. I won't quibble over terms. But you might want to think it through before playing into their hands."

"Yeah, well, I'll take it under advisement," said Bobby. He closed the phone. He stared intently at the noisy door for a long moment. "Hell's bells. All right, I will take responsibility for this. It's a unique situation and I don't like diving in until I know how deep it is. Sweeney, go get the paddy wagon and bring it around front."

Thirty minutes later a green Civil Guard van rolled down Second Avenue toward Boulder, and pulled up beneath the old interstate underpass. Sheriff Ben Lomax and a washed-out looking middle-aged white man in a rumpled suit whom Bobby took to be Brandon Blackwell were waiting on the American side of the old trailer, a squad car with flashing lights behind them. Lieutenant Robert Campbell and Corporal Mike Sweeney, both wearing sidearms just in case, got out of the van. Sweeney unlocked the rear doors, Bobby reached in and dragged a wailing and gibbering Gabrielle Martine out of the back, her hands cuffed behind her with a plastic tie. Her face was battered and still weeping from fear and the pepper spray, her Power Womyn suit was a bloody mess, and she had urinated and defecated on herself. He hauled her forward to the approximate location of the borderline between the two countries, shoved her forward at the waist, and with a mighty kick to her black buttocks launched her back into the United States.

Bobby pointed his finger at the two Americans. "This only happens once, got that?" he told them in a steely voice. "The next time I find

anything black or brown in my district I'm dressing it out like a deer, taking it out to the Fish and Wildlife breeding and research station in Rimini, and feeding it to the thylacines!"

"What about the car she came in?" asked Brandon Blackwell mildly.

"We're keeping that as a fine for trespassing and idiocy," said Bobby. "I think Johnny Selkirk will buy it off us. He can soup it up and use it for his smuggling trips."

"Fair enough," said Blackwell with a shrug.

XXXV

The Choice

(40 Years, 10 months and 19 days after Longview)

He only earns his freedom and existence who daily conquers them anew.
—Goethe

The Montana Border District Operations division in Missoula was responsible for the day-to-day running of all the Civil Guard units in its command, uniformed, detective and support groups alike, including the collection and analysis of crime statistics. After some thought, rather than make a big to-do over the brief monkoid infestation in Basin, Lieutenant Bobby Campbell filed a complete account on the Gabrielle Martine incident, including a short but concise summary of the reasoning behind his decision not to kill the negress, and sent it up the line as part of his daily report. He considered calling his father privately and telling him what had happened, but that might look a little too nepotistic and ass-covering to BD Ops, who were his immediate superiors, so Bobby just did it by the book. In response he got a visit from his father and Major Tom Horakova of BOSS several days later, in his office at the Basin station, "I gather you read my daily for the fifth?" he asked after they were seated and duly supplied with coffee.

"I did," said Colonel Campbell with a chuckle. "I have to admit, Bobby, your Form Nines are always better and more efficiently written than mine ever were. One minor traffic accident, one stolen car from Northwest Butte found abandoned in a ditch, one four-year-old boy reported missing but said juvenile found unharmed at a neighbor's house an hour later, one non-fatal shooting which you feel the magistrate will

probably rule familial and therefore outside our jurisdiction, as I also think he will. And one animal control issue."

"Okay, so am I busted back down to Guardsman and headed for a substation up in Alberta near the Arctic Circle?" Bobby Three. "Look, Dad, I know I violated Guard regulations, not to mention the Constitution, by not wasting that spook. I thought I was doing the right thing at the time and it fell within the purview of a judgment call, but I know the higher-ups may not think so."

"Do you still think you did the right thing?" asked his father.

"Yeah, pretty much," said Bobby. "I think Brandon Blackwell was telling me the truth about somebody in Burlington trying to set up that nanny to get killed in some kind of suicide-by-Northman scenario, as part of some strange American political intrigue. As a matter of principle, I don't believe we should play along with any of their moronic schemes if it can be avoided."

"Well, no need to start packing your gear or fitting Ally and the kids for mukluks just yet," replied Colonel Campbell with a smile. "The official view both from Operations and the Ethics Office is that you handled the situation just right, although the Opposition in Parliament will probably heckle the Minister of Justice with it during Question Time next week. I concur with that view, even if the raging purists in the House and elsewhere may not. You'll probably get some criticism from those quarters, but disregard it. I think you were correct in your comment about not wanting to dive in until you knew how deep it was, and we still don't know how deep it is. Forty years ago we won the verdict that counts at Longview, and I think we can survive a contamination of less than an hour, although we do need to make sure they don't start making a habit of this kind of thing."

"I told Lomax when I returned his wandering primate that this only happens once," Bobby Three told them. "I've issued orders to the squad here to that effect. I told them straight up that this was a once-off for political reasons, purely on my own authority, not policy, and from now on if anything black or brown pokes its nose across the Road, we bury it."

"The Political Bureau agrees that Brandon Blackwell's assessment makes sense," said Tom Horakova. "The latest PB thinking is that if

the Americans really are serious about creating this Prosperity Zone thingummy out here on the border, as far away from the mess they've spent the last century creating as they can get, and if they genuinely intend to bring a lot of their economic infrastructure and their technocratic ruling élite this close, where we will have easier access to the active and creative core of what remains of their society, then we're all in favor of it, and we should smooth the way. Your sparing the life of a stupid she-boon might have been technically against revolutionary protocol, but it fits in with that policy."

"Pragmatic Tendency?" chuckled Bobby. "Old President Brennan would have been proud of me."

"Probably," agreed his father.

Tom went on: "I think we know why the American government's internal opposition is attempting to create incidents such as your recent uninvited guest. The Americans want to set up this Green Zone, which is basically what it is, with its back to a solid wall, not a porous one which will allow people and ideas to flow back and forth between the U.S.A. and the Republic. As you tell me Blackwell stated, that would be the true constructive engagement, Northmen and the few remaining white Americans meeting on common ground. We want to encourage that. They want to shelter what's left of their three-hundred-year-old inheritance behind the NDF's guns, before the fruits of a century of folly break out of the concrete jungles and America finally has to pay the piper. But they don't want to acknowledge the fact that they're doing so, and they don't want any real interaction between the people on the two sides of the Road. Or at least they want to control the level and the quality of that interaction through their own version of constructive engagement, which I gather is kind of like them becoming missionaries to the savages and showing us the evil of our ways."

"In other words, they want to make sure they corrupt *us* with their wealth and luxury and their shades of gray, rather than us stiffening the spines of their own white people, imparting some racial pride, and making them question their national belief system of everybody being beautiful and Jesus loving all the little children of the world, blah blah blah and ishkabibble," said Bobby keenly.

"That's the nub of it, yes," agreed Horakova. "Looks like these idiots are going to try to maintain some pretense of political correctness right up to the last, just before they sink out of sight under the weight of their own crapulence. Their ship has almost sunk, but when they hit the water they grab an anvil instead of a life preserver."

"There's an old saying that when you find yourself in a hole, the first thing you need to do is stop digging," said Colonel Bob. "The Americans have never learned that, but eventually that old devil reality comes knocking and will no longer be denied. Look at it from the Americans' point of view: their country is on the brink of collapse into anarchy, and they do retain sense enough to realize the fact. But they haven't got the political will actually to *do* anything about it. Oh, sure, there's things they *could* do about the problem of the cities, even now. The Old Man always said that white America could save itself at the eleventh hour and the fifty-ninth minute if they ever somehow changed their thinking and recovered their ancient courage. Even the rump U.S. government still has enough muscle to deal with the urban problem, starting with that carpet-bombing you mentioned the other night when we were talking about this out on your porch. The first essential measure has to be to *change the demographics*, swing them back in favor of white people and drastically cut the number of non-whites consuming America's substance while giving back nothing in return. But to take those measures that would be necessary to survive would involve the United States of America, its entire political establishment and intelligentsia and ruling élite, admitting that they have been *wrong about race*. Wrong for a hundred years. They will literally die before doing that. Unfortunately they're going to take a lot of white people with them whose only crime was to be born on the wrong side of that Road over there. That's why we're going along with this constructive engagement business. We may end up saving millions of our people's lives by plucking them out of the massive flood of human excrement that's about to burst the dams all over the eastern part of the continent."

"Or maybe do some carpet-bombing ourselves?" suggested Bobby. "That would be one way to change the continent's demographics in a damned hurry."

"I know the Political Bureau is looking at all the possible angles and certain members of the General Staff have been sitting in on the discussions," Tom told them. "Beyond that I have no idea, and wouldn't talk about it if I did."

"Fair enough. You said we may have figured out who in their power structure is trying to sabotage the project on their end, by sending blackamoors to tempt us naughty racist fellows into sin?" asked Bobby.

"I'm convinced it's the Office of Northwest Recovery itself, and that kike who runs it, Seth Goldblum," said his father. "Why the hell do you think they issued a black woman a travel warrant to enter the NAR, knowing full well what would happen to her? Or what *would* have happened if you hadn't decided to look before you leaped?"

"I just got back from a special briefing in Olympia, and I learned a few things I didn't know, and which I am authorized to talk about, all the usual Official Secrets Act disclaimers being duly invoked," said Major Horakova. "The fact is that the United States government is considering disbanding the whole agency, partly in the name of so-called constructive engagement, but more frankly as a simple cost-cutting measure. They're on the bones of their ass financially, every penny counts, and by now it's obvious that the ONR is never going to be able to fulfill its main function, which is to undo Longview and the War of Independence and bring the Northwest Republic back into the U.S.A. Not happening, no way, José, and it's becoming increasingly difficult to justify keeping a whole huge government department spinning its wheels and accomplishing nothing, while eating up millions of NADs. Any spying and sabotage they want done regarding the Republic can be attempted by half a dozen other agencies, the agencies that were originally created a century and a half a go to fulfill such functions, and who have always been jealous as hell of the ONR being cock of the walk on Northwest affairs. FBI, CIA, NSA, Homeland Security, the NGOs like ADL and SPLC, they have been eyeing that massive ONR budget and drooling for decades, aching to carve up that lovely pie and share it out amongst themselves. Of course, when that happens, those agencies will then end up cutting one another's throats to see who gets the biggest and juiciest pieces of the carcass."

"Maybe literally cutting one another's throats," said Bobby. "I understand that federal agencies conduct outright gang wars over turf and personnel and the dwindling tax flow now, complete with assassinations and bombing each other's offices in Burlington and D.C."

"They do indeed," said Horakova with a laugh. "Last year an FBI assistant director was shot dead in his office in Fort Hoover with a silenced weapon by one of his own department heads. The bone of contention was a corner office with an especially comfortable swivel chair."

"I don't imagine Goldblum and his ONR bitter-enders are happy at the prospect of being put out to pasture," remarked Bobby Three.

"Oh, they're spitting nails," said Horakova with a smile. "The mighty U.S. of A., finally accepting the verdict of history? Unthinkable! Needless to say, all of the old neo-conservative and *revanchist* elements in the American power structure are fighting against the agency's disbandment tooth and nail, as are the East Canadians—it looks like Ottawa may end up being the last citadel of completely entrenched Jewish power in the world."

"They always were," added Campbell senior. "I notice that after those Israeli refugees took over, Ottawa started quietly but effectively reducing their non-white immigration. Not that Toronto and Montreal and Windsor and some other places aren't still nigger-riddled slums, but they do seem to have kept a better rein on things than the Americans ever did. They don't have nearly the same problems with their cities that the Americans do."

"I think part of that has to do with the fact that other than the strip just a few hundred miles above the U.S. and NAR borders, Canada was never all that inhabitable for non-whites," said Horakova. "Especially Africans. Negroids and dark-skinned people on the whole have never liked excessive cold. They're not genetically engineered for it. Now that we have the best and most temperate parts of British Columbia and Alberta, the amount of territory in Canada which is genuinely comfortable for human habitation is sharply reduced."

"Not to mention the Jews disliking any competition in the victimology stakes," said Bobby. "Canada is a little bit better off than the rump of the U.S.A. materially, true, but there is still only a limited

level of resources and goods to go around, and with almost eight million Jews now, you know who's going to get the lion's share, or I suppose I should say the jackal's share. Anyway, returning to practical matters, guys, what do we do now?"

"I gather everybody on the ground Over The Road wants the Community Prosperity Zone project to get on track and succeed, and they want to see some of those New American Dollars start flowing from Burlington to Basin?" asked Tom.

"Yes, sir, that appears to be the case," replied Bobby. "There are no ONR personnel that we know of Over There in Jefferson County, except for a few snitches who send emails to Burlington telling them nothing in particular for a few bucks, and for a few bucks more, they copy us with the same emails. At least we *think* we know them all."

"I had a talk with General Cardinale at the WPB in Olympia yesterday. He agreed that you need to be aware of any possible bad actors Over There, and so he gave me their latest rat roster for Jefferson, Silver Bow, and Lewis and Clark Counties," said Tom, opening his briefcase and handing Bobby a couple of sheets of paper. "This information is borrowed from the ONR files in Burlington, so unless they've detected our latest hack, this list is up to date."

"That possible?" asked Campbell senior. "That they've spotted the hack and slipped us a beard?"

"Probably not," replied Horakova. "Their IT security has been slipping for years. There's significantly fewer young computer geek kids coming along, as the white population shrinks and the Circus steadily downsizes the Jewish component of the American civil service with rigged accidents and the occasional garroting. There's a lot less money to pay those IT grads who do come along and give them all the latest cyber-toys, so the real hotshots are now headed to the techie expat colonies in South America and North Africa. The ONR and other U.S. government agencies use outdated software and old hardware, and their firewalls are antique, so I think I can promise you that's not a disinformation plant. Well, I'm pretty sure, anyway. Any unfamiliar names, Bobby?"

"Uh, no, I'm familiar with all—wait, no, I don't know this character Mallinson in American Helena. He new?" asked Bobby.

"Yes, but don't worry about him," said Horakova. "He's one of ours, a synthetic. He doesn't actually exist. The Circus created the identity, did a full background on him including faked CCTV footage that has him going from a bogus address to a bogus job, drinking in bars and shopping for underwear and so on. He communicates with the ONR as a hologram."

"The War Prevention Bureau is feeding the ONR disinformation through a hologram?" asked Bobby Three, bemused.

"Yeah, it's cheaper and less dangerous than risking a real agent," said Horakova. "The ONR has budget constraints like every other American government agency, so they haven't gotten around to actually calling Mr. Mallinson in for a meet. With any luck they'll be disbanded as an agency fairly soon, their assets will fall into disarray, and the identity can just disappear without Goldblum's snakes ever figuring out we put one over on them. But it's not just disinformation. By way of selling his cover, Mallinson feeds them legitimate low-level intelligence that's been carefully screened and scrubbed, and he's also supposedly the American-side link to a network of agents on our side of the border, a daring dude who slips across the Road and meets with his heroic spies for truth, justice, and the Amurrican way by campfires under the light of a pale prairie moon. Don't worry, the spy network are holograms and synthetics as well. That's where the real disinformation gets slipped in. The Office of Northwest Recovery is convinced they've got six medium-placed assets over here. In reality we're just playing a video game with them."

"That's got to be Birdie!" laughed Bob senior.

"Got it in one!" confirmed Tom.

"Speaking of the Circus, how's Vince doing?" asked Robert.

"Getting on in years and showing it, but that old gangster brain of his is still going strong," Horakova told them. "He and Betsy send their love to Ally and the kids. And you, of course, Bobby."

"Any chance they'll be able to make it out here for Christmas like they did last year, even if just for a day visit out of Missoula?" asked Bobby. "Ally and I were kicking around the idea of maybe spending part of the holidays in Olympia, since we have so many friends there who want to see the kids and catch up, but what with all this crap going

on Over The Road and niggers wandering around where they hadn't oughta, I'm almost certainly going to have to be on duty here. I know Ally always loves seeing her Aunt Betsy and Dad together, the two people who saved her and brought her Home. Cathy thinks the Princess Ha-Tonna story is a hoot, although I'm not sure she believes it."

"Swear to God!" said his father with a laugh, raising his right hand.

"I'll see if I can remember to ask," said Tom.

"How's Ally like her new teaching job?" asked Bob senior.

"She just started at Cataract High last week and so far it's great," said Bobby. "The kids and the staff are still a little in awe of the whole Daughter of the Nation thing, but Ally has always been good at putting people at ease over that. She is doing a special class on Lost Creek and the Solutrean Hypothesis, and they've had to move it to the auditorium because so many kids signed up for it."

"Great! Anyway, Bobby, getting back to your question as to what you do about all this mess going on Over The Road, just keep a close eye out. Don't start anything, but if anything does start, make sure the Northwest Republic finishes it."

* * *

Ben Lomax and Brandon Blackwell had solemnly promised Gabrielle Martine that they would maintain the silence of the grave regarding what had happened to her during her impromptu walk on the wild side Over The Road, and the worse-for-wear condition in which she had been returned. They both broke their promise within minutes of sending Agent Hornbuckle to drive her down to the hospital in American Butte for treatment to avoid wagging tongues at the local clinic. Blackwell gave Mona James and Colonel Hart a full report, and Ben Lomax brought the Jefferson County kitchen cabinet up to speed in his own office, with the help of a bottle of bourbon and some Styrofoam cups, with the result that Lomax's deputies and staff soon overheard hoots of mocking laughter emanating from behind the closed office door. By nine o'clock that night, Gabi's little adventure was all over town.

By way of refusing to admit to herself or anyone else that she had royally screwed the pooch, over the next few days Gabrielle Martine developed an obsession bordering on the deranged with the Lexus Model 12 luxury sedan she had left behind parked in front of the Basin cop shop. The vehicle was a courtesy loaner from the Montana state government, so at some point its loss would have to be explained by the Economic Recovery Administration and the state motor pool would have to be compensated, an expense the ERA would find irritating and Gabrielle would find very embarrassing. "What are you doing to get my car back?" she demanded of her staff.

"Actually, ma'am, it's not your car," replied Mona James. "We borrowed it from the state, remember?"

"Then it's even worse to allow the racists to steal it!" shrieked Gabi.

"They didn't steal it. They view it as contraband which they confiscated after you used it to make an illegal and unauthorized entry into their country," explained Brandon Blackwell patiently.

"No it wasn't illegal!" insisted Gabi. "I had a permit! You ought to know, you got it for me."

"Illegal under the laws of *their* country," Blackwell explained wearily.

"They're not a country!" yelled Gabi. "They're nothing but racist criminals who assaulted and falsely imprisoned an official of the government of the United States! They're traitors!"

"Hardly, marm, unless the men who assaulted you were over forty years of age," put in Colonel Hart suavely. "If they were younger than that, then they were not born under United States law and have never drawn a breath under United States jurisdiction. The letter of the law may say otherwise, of course, but in real life it's a bit thick demanding people to be loyal to a country they have never been any part of."

Gabrielle stormed out of the office in the Boulder Hot Springs hotel. "Letter of my ass! Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit! *Get me my muthafukkin' ride back!"* she shrieked as she left.

"You enjoy pushing her buttons, don't you?" Mona asked Hart when their boss had gone. She was barely able to suppress a smile.

"Immensely," replied Hart with a chuckle.

"You guys do realize, don't you, that from now on this whole trip is going to be about nothing but the car, the car, the goddamned car?" said Brandon Blackwell. "Any chance we *could* get the damned thing back at all? Maybe have Sheriff Lomax talk to that Nazi cop lieutenant?"

"They're not all Nazis," Mona reminded him.

"According to the ONR's intelligence file on Campbell, he is," Blackwell told them. "He and his wife are both members of NUNS, the Northwest Union of National Socialists, and their twelve-year-old son is a member of both officially recognized youth groups, the Pioneers and the Hitler Youth."

"The ONR bothered to put together a file on a junior rural police officer?" asked Hart curiously.

"Oh, yes," replied Mona James. "Lieutenant Robert Campbell the Third is married to Allura Myers, the daughter of presidential assassin Georgia Myers. Right after the killing of President Hunter Wallace, when she was a toddler of about nineteen months or so, the child was abducted by a couple of WPB goons from her home in Washington, D.C., who shot and killed her grandmother and her nanny in the process and spirited her away to racist-occupied Montana in the middle of a raging war. Their propaganda people decided this act of infant kidnapping and the murder of two unarmed women would make a good national epic of Aryan heroic vitalism, as I believe they refer to it, and so she became kind of a poster child for the Northwest Republic. They call her the Daughter of the Nation, in honor of her mother's exploits as a whore and her skill with a sharpened pencil. Campbell, the man she married, is the son of one of the Circus ops who kidnapped her, who is now the Civil Guard commander of the entire Montana Border District. The other is a former prostitute who is still with the WPB. Married to the current director of the agency, in fact. So yes, the Office of Northwest Recovery has a file on the whole Campbell family."

"Hmm . . . interesting," mused Hart. "Wonder if we can do anything with that? Could I take a look at that file?"

"Sure," said Mona. "I'll send it to your laptop."

"But do you think Lomax could help get Gabi's damned Lexus back from the goots?" persisted Blackwell.

"I rather doubt it," said Mona. "I don't think Sheriff Ben has too many favors racked up with his colleague Across The Road right now. Rather the reverse, I'd say. Campbell probably figures Lomax owes him for not slaughtering Gabi on the spot."

"You seem to have talked him out of it, Brandon," remarked Hart. "Why did you bother?"

"You two are FBI and NMA. You get to go back to your respective agencies when we leave this cow pie of a town," said Blackwell. "I would have to explain to the ERA in Burlington why I was returning minus an African-American Power Womyn, the loss of whom would really screw up the top management's diversity quotas. It's not just the risk of getting demoted and sent to run a paper mill in West Virginia. That would be the least of my worries. You know about the civil service's new CFI policy, Criminalizing Failure and Incompetence? They wouldn't even have to put me on trial. They could just bring a civil lawsuit against me, slap me with some fifty-million-dollar or so civil judgment that I could never pay and then have me civilly committed to a penal factory for contempt of court for not paying the fine."

"Yeah, that's an old trick," commented Mona. "That goes back to the days of the first mandatory government health insurance. If you didn't buy the insurance, the IRS hit you with a tax bill for it. Then if you didn't pay the fine and the taxes, off you went to a prison factory making military uniforms or farmed out to private companies or whatever. They eventually stopped the practice when they realized the government didn't have the facilities to lock up tens of millions of people, and the value of their labor still didn't outweigh the cost. Stalin could make that kind of thing work, but we never could."

"So you see why I would rather get Gabi back to the ERA in one piece," said Blackwell. "My apartment in Burlington may be a roach nest the size of a double-wide coffin, and a deep freeze in winter when the power goes off, but it's still better than a forced career in manufacturing. At my age I wouldn't survive, so getting Gabi back to Vermont intact is kind of a priority with me."

"She can still put the bad-mouth on you if you don't recover her precious Lexus," pointed out Mona. "Could she send you to prison over an automobile which she lost through her own idiocy?" Brandon

looked at her, and Mona had the grace to look away. "Sorry," she said. They both knew that because Brandon was white and male, Gabrielle Martine could pretty much do anything she wanted to him and scapegoat him any way, if she was sufficiently irritated or if she just wanted to lash out. Having someone to blame was one of the primary reasons why a certain number of white male bureaucrats like him were kept on in the civil service.

"*Is* there any way in which the car can be recovered?" asked Hart.

"That Nazi—that Northwest cop said they might sell it to one of their local blockade runners as a joke," said Brandon. "Some cowboy from their side who's notorious for it, young joker named Selkirk. For all I know, he might have been serious. I asked Lomax who the fascist was talking about, and the way he describes it, this kid might be dumb enough to drive the car back over the Road to impress some girl he's dating on this side."

"That's illegal on the girl's part," spoke up Agent Hornbuckle. "A federal felony if she is knowingly harboring or consorting with anyone from the racist entity. The FBI enforces those laws, or we're supposed to. If we can arrest this smuggler maybe we could trade him for the car."

"Do you still have your tracker on the vehicle?" Hart asked Mona.

"Surely any smuggler worth his salt would have sense enough to remove or disable the GPS!" said Brandon.

"It's not in the GPS itself," said Mona. "I stayed away from those in case Gabi or anybody who might want to defect tampered with it. Besides, factory-standard GPS doesn't track inside the Republic, since the Republic doesn't exist. The bugs I put on the four cars weren't actual GPS trackers per se, they were micro-transponders clipped to the car's main onboard computer, programmed to ping my phone if the vehicle crossed the interstate."

"Who did you think was going to defect to the Northwest?" demanded Agent Hornbuckle, miffed. "That's against the will of the Lord!"

"She suspected *us,* old chap," said Colonel Hart sardonically. "You and me and Brandon here. It's in our genetic makeup to be naughty boys, you see. This close to the border, one never knows if even one of us domesticated specimens of the pale and beastly breed might yet feel

the ancestral call of the wild, and slip the collar and leash to go running through the dark forest once again."

"It's just routine, Earl," snorted Mona impatiently. "Just policy."

"Nobody told me about any such policy," said Hornbuckle sulkily.

"Well, they wouldn't, would they? *Qui custodes ipsos custodes?"* quoted Brandon dryly.

"Precisely," said Hart.

"Huh?" said Hornbuckle. "That don't sound Amurrican."

"It's Latin," said Mona. "It means 'Who guards the guardians?' and in this case, I do."

"Getting back to the question at hand, can you use the transponder to locate the Lexus over there on their side?" asked Hart.

"No," said Mona. "Like I said, our civilian GPS satellites aren't programmed for their side at all, again as a measure to prevent defections and also to prevent the Northmen from hacking the satellites and using them to operate their own mapping and tracking programs."

"Then how do the Northmen get around over there, with no GPS?" asked Agent Hornbuckle curiously.

"Probably the same way our ancestors used to get around before satellites and computers were invented," said Brandon. "They use road maps and signs, and they ask directions when they get lost. Agent James, if they don't find your tracker and the car crosses the Road again, will it at least trip the alarm on your phone and computer? And could you use GPS to find it then?"

"As long as the car stays on our side of the Road, yes," said Mona.

Luck was with them. Johnny Selkirk did indeed buy the Lexus off the Basin station for a generous but not exorbitant donation to the Civil Guard Family and Dependents' Fund, thinking he could use it on his next run into the land of the red, white, and blue. He did yank out the factory-issue GPS tracker as a standard precaution, but hadn't gotten around to taking the rest of the engine down yet when he decided to say to hell with it, he was off to find Danny Tolliver. On the evening of September tenth, right around sunset, Mona James' phone pinged.

* * *

Brandon and Gabi were busy dealing with some local businessmen who had come sniffing around looking for the first taste of CPZ dollars, and so Mona called Hart and Hornbuckle to her room. "I've got it on my laptop," she told them, looking at the screen. "The vehicle crossed back over to our side of the border at 7:18 p.m. and it is now stationary at a location right at the eastern end of Second Avenue, on the southwest corner of the Boulder Cemetery."

"That's a straight shot up Second Avenue from their side," said Hornbuckle. "Whoever it is has got to be pretty ballsy, driving right through town in a stolen government staff car."

"Somehow I don't think Sheriff Lomax is overly concerned with enforcing the law in any way that might make waves with his unpleasant neighbors," said Mona. "That's one of the things that's going to have to change around here, and I will be having some words with the appropriate people in Burlington when I get back, on the subject of arranging for a new sheriff in Jefferson County."

"You said stationary?" put in Hart. "That looks like chummy might be meeting someone. Could this be one of their people meeting an intelligence asset on this side? A government car would actually be a neat bit of camouflage."

"Well, let's go find out," said Mona. "Get your vest on, Agent Hornbuckle. Make sure you bring your taser. I want to see if we can not only recover Gabi's stupid car, but catch the driver. Could I persuade you to accompany us, Colonel?"

"My dear lady, I wouldn't miss it for the world," said Hart gallantly.

There was no meeting of spies in Boulder Cemetery, just Johnny Selkirk and Danny Tolliver snatching a moment of privacy. Several days before, Danny had managed surreptitiously to purchase a disposable cell phone from a vending machine in a local hardware store, while her father and grandfather had been loading one of the trucks with cases of pesticide and cattle vitamins and other miscellaneous items. The cheap Indonesian junk phone had only the most basic apps and a bare minimum range and minute limit, without all kinds of murderously expensive add-ons, but she could and did text the number to John with the admonition not to call her at all. They had to talk, and

she would text him instructions as to when and where it was safe to meet.

She was in town that evening with old Elwood, who had only been able to get a late appointment for his bimonthly checkup at the rundown local clinic, to make sure his cheap plastic artificial knee was still functioning. He left her in the library, ostensibly to study, while he sat in the waiting room for the circuit-riding doctor from Butte. He left instructions with the librarian, Ms. Goodspeed, to make sure Danny did not use any email-capable computers or the public phone. Since Ms. Goodspeed was the widow of a Union veteran killed in the War of Independence and the mother of another wounded in the Seven Weeks War, he knew she could be relied upon.

Danny was tired of it all and she decided to take the bull by the horns, knowing full well that thereby she could be landing herself some years of exile in North Dakota and elsewhere, but she had to try to get this settled. She texted Johnny to meet her at 7:30 on the corner of Second Avenue and South Madison, knowing that he was always punctual. At 7:27 she got up to take a video disc back to the shelf, leaving her books and notebooks on the table, and as soon as she was around the corner out of range of Ms. Goodspeed's eagle eye, she slipped out the back door of the library and ran down the street. John picked her up on Second on the fly, driving a big black luxury sedan she'd never seen before, and within three minutes they were parked at the cemetery. After the preliminary greetings were over Danny got right down to business. "Johnny, we need to decide what we're going to do. My parents say I can't see you any more or else they're shipping me out of state, my grandfather says he's going to kill you if he sees you, he's going around carrying this big cannon he had back in the war to do just that, and everybody in town is looking at me like I'm Jezebel and Delilah and the Witch of Endor rolled into one. Well, not everybody, but a lot of people. I'm willing to put up with all of it and I'm willing to fight for us, but I have to know what I'm fighting for. Do you want me?"

"I do," Johnny told her. "I do, honey. Okay, part of it is I want you so I can stand up and spit in the eye of all these people who say we can't be together and who are trying to tell us how to run our lives. That's

some of it, and I won't deny that, Danny. But not all of it. Look, if I asked you to marry me, would you?"

"I'd have to be really sure," she said. "My parents are right. I know I'm way young to be making that kind of decision, even if I was living Over The Road in your country."

"Yeah, it's a bit young even in the Republic," said Johnny. "Most couples wait until they're nineteen or twenty and they've done their National Service, at least. But the Republic believes in marriage and family and personal commitment. That's one reason we developed the prom baby custom, as strange and contradictory as that may sound, to encourage that kind of commitment early and make sure by the time they've finished their service and they're ready to start the serious business of life, young white couples know who they're going to be starting it with and why. None of this crap about drifting along until you're twenty-nine or thirty-three years old and still sitting in a furnished room or your parents' basement playing video games like the Americans used to do."

"Still do, sometimes," said Danny pensively. "Johnny, if our getting married is the only way we could be together at all, then I'm willing to do that. But I'd have to drop out of school and maybe never see my folks again . . ."

"No, it wouldn't be that bad," Johnny assured her. "Danny, we live barely ten miles from one another! Of course you'd see your family! There are a lot of people with relatives on both sides of the border, and they visit back and forth all the time!"

"Do those families have relatives who are threatening to kill one another?" asked Danny.

"Some of 'em did, for a long time," said John soberly. "Maybe if we were married your grandfather would come around."

"Would yours?" she asked.

"I don't know. If he doesn't, that's his problem. But it's not like you have to run off and get married to me right this instant. Look, why don't you just Come Home, Danny? Emigrate? You're sixteen now, and our law says you're an adult capable of making that decision, so just move your stuff on over the Road."

"To where?" she asked. "What would I do? What about school?"

"The Labor Service has work-and-study programs, so you can finish your senior year at Cataract High, and some of it goes as credit toward your national service as well. They'll put you to work, and contrary to what you may have been told over here on your side, it's not slave labor. You do get paid, at the normal civil service rate."

"Doing what?" asked Danny, interested.

"Not sure," he answered. "The Labor Service does all kinds of things to keep the community running. When I did my stint they had us working a road crew for six months, then planting seedlings, then we helped a private company upgrade the water and sewage plant and hook it up to irrigation lines. Then I went into the army, but you're a girl so you won't have to do that, unless you want to. But you're a farm girl, and you can do pretty much anything that needs doing. At first you could live in a girl's dorm they've got out on Creek Side Road for female personnel who work in this area. Later on, as a new immigrant you can get a little house or apartment from the Bureau of Race and Resettlement at a really low rent, although it won't be much. Not many new people want to settle here in the Border District itself, so there's not much immigrant housing. But you see what I'm saying, Danny? If you Came Home you could support yourself, and finish school, and have a paid job, and we wouldn't be rushed on the marriage thing. All the pressure would be off."

"Uh, I'm not sure I could make it through senior year at Cataract," said Danny dubiously. "I mean academically. From what I hear your high school is about like a major university over here. You have things like calculus, and your language you have to speak perfectly before you graduate."

"Well, you told me they made you learn Spanish starting in seventh grade," said Johnny with a laugh.

"Yeah, but that was just something left over from all those years ago when there were Mexicans everywhere," said Danny. "I mean I don't speak Latin, for one thing."

"It's not that hard," Johnny assured us. "For most of us it's only a one-year basic class in ninth grade so you can understand where a lot of our language comes from, and so you can learn to think better with declensions and stuff, unless a student wants to keep up with it. You

might not even have to take it, but if you do you're smart as a whip, and you won't have any trouble. I still have my old notebooks from Cataract and I can help you. Plus if you go to Cataract you can have Mrs. Campbell for history. The Daughter of the Nation."

"Who?" asked Danny.

"Oh, I guess you wouldn't know. Her mom was a great heroine in the second war. Never mind. The fact is that you can Come Home and start living your own life, and you and I can see one another whenever we want, we can take our time and see if it's the right thing . . ."

Autumn was coming on, but the twilight was still warm, and so Johnny had left the driver's side window down. He was turned to face Danny while speaking to her, so he hadn't seen FBI Agent Mona James creeping up on him in the side mirror. The crackling taser prongs slammed into Johnny's back and neck and he suddenly leaped in the seat like a fish hooked on a line, howling in pain. Danny screamed in shock and fear. Johnny clawed the door of the Lexus open and rolled out onto the ground, writhing, and yet with a superhuman effort he still managed to stagger to his feet and jerk his gun from the belt clip holster beneath his jacket. His arm was too numb to even raise the weapon and his fingers couldn't have fired if he had. Colonel Hart stepped forward and dropped him with a quick and expert martial arts chop to the neck, retrieving the gun as it slipped from Johnny's hand as he fell. On the passenger side Agent Earl Hornbuckle pulled the door open and dragged Danny out into the dirt, screaming and kicking. He picked her up by the collar of her blouse, slammed her against the car and jerked her arms behind her back, whipping a pair of plastic cuffs onto her wrists. "Well, I got mine!" he called out cheerfully to the others.

"And we've got ours," said Mona, as she and Hart dragged a handcuffed Johnny Selkirk to his feet.

"And we got Gabi's ride back!" crowed Hornbuckle, almost jumping with joy at the FBI's first victory over the hated Northmen in a very long time. "What are we gonna charge these two evildoers with, Agent James?"

Mona was almost equally pleased with herself. "Oh, all kinds of sanctions violations and illegal entry and hatecrimes for our young perpetrator here, I think," she giggled, shaking the still-dazed Johnny.

"The nearest federal judge is in Billings. Time he had some work to do. For her, how about Unauthorized Contact and maybe espionage if it turns out she was whispering state secrets into this racist joker's ear?"

A clap of thunder and a flash of lightning shattered the still sunset air, and the passenger-side window of the Lexus exploded into powder. Roughly ten paces away from where Hornbuckle gripped Danny, just past the low brick boundary wall of the cemetery, a large shape rose up by a tombstone. It was old Elwood Tolliver, and he held the antique .357 Magnum in a relaxed two-handed stance, the hammer cocked back. His voice was deep and calm. "That's my granddaughter you've got there. Let her go. Now."

"I'm an FBI agent and I'm making a national security arrest!" yelled Hornbuckle, startled. "Who the hell are you?"

"Yeah, I remember, from back in the day," rumbled Elwood. "You got the look of some of them buzz-cut boo-yahs, all right. I also remember that whenever there was a booby-trapped door to be kicked, or a dark road that needed driving down, or an exposed sentry post that needed to be covered, somehow it was always us local boys who drew the short straw. I'm not impressed. I don't care who you are, I don't care what kind of bird-brained badge or paper you're carrying, or what asshole in a black robe you think gives you permission to come here and lay hands on my family. I don't care what you do with that Selkirk kid, but you're going to let my granddaughter go, right now. If you don't, or if I see your hand so much as twitch like you're going for your gun, I'm going blow that buzz-cut of yours up into that elm tree behind you. That's the second time I've told you, jackass. I won't tell you again. *Do it!*"

John Selkirk was still shaky on his feet, and in addition to the plastic cuffs that held his arms behind his back, Mona had slipped a steel handcuff around his right elbow for control, but he understood who Elwood was and that he was trying to get Danny free and clear of their captors. He called out, "Mr. Tolliver! You got a damned limey rent-a-soldier trying to flank you on your right!"

"I see him, son, but thanks for the heads-up anyway," Elwood called in reply. "All right, Colonel Blimp, I know where you are, and you

ain't getting anywhere near me before I shoot you as well as this turkey holding my granddaughter. We going to play it that way?"

"I'm actually rather a good shot myself, old chap," answered Hart, lying prone behind the 30-inch brick boundary wall with his .41-calber New Model Army officer's issue sidearm in his hand, steeling himself to roll over the wall and cover behind one of the tombstones.

"I may be old, but I ain't your chap," replied Elwood steadily. "Tell you what. I'm going to count to three and then I'm going to kill Buzz-cut here. You got until then to make your move. One. Two . . ."

"Oh, screw this!" yelled Mona. "Enough of this bullshit! Put your dicks away, gentlemen!"

Danny gasped. "What kind of a lady uses language like that?" she cried indignantly.

"I'm not a lady, you little bitch, I'm a woman," snapped Mona in irritation. "There's a difference."

"So I see," said Danny.

"I mean it, you guys, enough with the High Noon bullshit!" Mona went on. "We got what we came for, the car and the blockade runner. We don't need all the complications involved in a shoot-out with some local curmudgeon. Malcolm, stand up slowly, holster your weapon, and come back here. Earl, let the girl go. We know where to find her if we want her."

"Yeah?" said Elwood. "Well, just remember, where you find her, you find me. In case you hadn't noticed, *Mzzzzzz* whoever the hell you are, you FBI ain't so scary any more. Haven't been for forty years."

Several minutes later, Elwood and Danny were in his truck and headed for home. "I don't think they'll really come back and try to arrest you, Danny," said Elwood. "I wasn't kidding, they really aren't what they used to be, there's only two of them, and they're on thin ice out here. But still, you might want to stay close for a few days." Danny stared straight ahead, silent. "I'm sorry they got the Selkirk boy, not for his own sake, but because of the pain this is causing you, honey," he said gently. "But truth to tell, this had to end somehow and sometime soon, and this might actually be one of the better possible endings."

Danny was quiet for a time. "How did you know where to find us?" she asked after a while.

"When Doris Goodspeed told me you'd flown the coop, it wasn't hard to figure out," said Elwood. "Kids in Boulder, Montana, have been boozing, and toking, and making out, and sometimes getting knocked up in that cemetery for a hundred years, Danny. Don't ask me why, when there's plenty of other places around. That's just where Boulder teenagers always sneak off to do what they shouldn't be doing. Kind of a youth tradition, I guess you'd call it." He was quiet as well for a while. "I remember when I was fifteen and got my license and my dad let me borrow his truck for the first time, I took a young lady to a movie and then out there to the cemetery afterward. A girl even younger than you are. Carol was her name. Carol Selkirk." Danny looked at him in astonishment. "Things weren't always like this, Danny," he told her.

They got home several minutes later. Alice Tolliver had been phoned by Doris Goodspeed the librarian and given the full dish, and she stood up from the kitchen table and was about to light into Danny full bore, when Elwood held up his hand and shook his head. "Leave her be, Alice," he said. "It ended tonight. I'll tell you. Give her some time."

Danny took the time to go out in back of the house and stand by the milking barn. For a long time she looked up at the many, many stars that appear overhead in the night sky of Montana. Then she took out the cheap Indonesian phone she'd gotten from the vending machine. She dialed a number that Johnny had made her memorize, for just such an occasion as this.

A male voice answered. He wasn't irritated, just curious. "Now, who on earth would be calling me from a burner phone on the American side?"

"Captain Selkirk?" asked Danny.

"Speaking."

"My name is Danielle Tolliver. I'm kind of a friend of John's."

"I know who you are, miss. What's happened?"

Danielle told him what had happened, without crying or hysteria or excuse or evasion. "Thank you, Danielle," replied Selkirk when she had finished. "This family owes you a great debt."

"Will you help Johnny?" she pleaded. "Don't let them take him away to Billings!"

"Don't worry, we've got this. How about you? Are you going to be all right? If your grandfather finds out you called me, he is going to be very angry."

"I know," said Danny. "I don't think he'll hurt me, but they're probably going to send me to North Dakota."

"Yes, he's very good at sending people away from the Northwest," said Selkirk tightly. "Danny, I have to go, but I'd like to tell you something first. A long time ago, the people in this part of Montana had to make the very same choice you've made tonight. I think you've made the right one, but if it helps, it wasn't any easier back then."

"I know," said Danny.

XXXVI

Fortune Favors The Brave

(40 Years, 10 months and 19 days after Longview)

Fortes fortuna juvat.
—Latin proverb

One of the Civil Guard's informants Over the Road was Mike Sweeney's cousin, who was ideally placed because she worked as the night dispatcher in the sheriff's office, so Lieutenant Bobby Campbell knew about what had happened with Johnny Selkirk by 8:30 p.m. that night. He was back at the Guard station in Basin by nine, having called his entire complement back on duty, consisting of eight men and one female officer. They all gathered in the station's small operations center, where he ordered Sergeant Boardman to start distributing field gear and weapons. "Can your cousin let us know when they leave to take Selkirk to Billings?" he asked Sweeney.

"They're not driving, apparently," replied Sweeney. "Roxy said the FBI agents have called for a helicopter from Billings to transport him to the detention center there. The feds have a special wing in the jail for their prisoners."

"Can she give us any ETA on the chopper?"

The corporal shrugged. "Maybe, but Ben Lomax suspects she's on our pad—hell, he *knows* it. He doesn't fire her because he's known Roxy since she was a baby, she's a good dispatcher, Jefferson County doesn't pay chicken feed to its employees, and he knows she needs the extra

money. Besides, he figures if he canned her, we'd just recruit somebody else in his office he doesn't know about."

"How do you know all this?" asked Bobby.

"Ben told her so," replied Sweeney. "But he also told her that if something big happened that might mean real trouble, she was to keep quiet to us about it, or she'd lose her job. I think Roxy gave me that one call because she likes Johnny, and she's his cousin too, a third cousin I think. Don't know if she likes him enough to lose her job and pension over him, though. She may give me another call tonight; on the other hand she may not."

"Nuts!" said Bobby. "How long do you think it will take for those people in Billings to scramble a chopper and make it to Boulder?"

"They may already be in the air, sir."

Bobby scowled. "All right, we've got to get over there, extract John, and get him back on our side of the Road before that copter gets into the air on the return trip. Once he gets out of the county and they get him into a cell in Billings, this is no longer a local hiccup, it's a full-fledged incident of the kind that could snowball into something really serious. The Republic has a policy: we are not subject to the laws of the United States. Americans don't arrest us or put us in their prisons with mud people. They did enough of that evil mess before the War of Independence. We haven't always been able to enforce that down through the years when NAR citizens have gotten into trouble, but this is close enough where we *can* do something about it, and I'll be damned if I'm going to let the stinking FBI, who shouldn't even be over there, take a Northwest citizen from my patch away into the interior somewhere and bury him with niggers. Even if he did get himself caught like an idiot, because he was thinking with his third leg instead of his brain. I haven't actually been over into Boulder for obvious reasons, but I assume some of you guys have spent some time over there. Is there any place near the jail where they could land a helicopter, a helipad on the roof or something like that?"

"No, sir," replied Boardman. "They'll have to land at the airport and those feebs will have to drive him down there."

"How far is the airport from the sheriff's office?" asked Bobby.

"About a mile and a half."

"Show me on the map," commanded Bobby. He followed Boardman's finger on the wall.

"The sheriff's office is on South Washington Street, and the jail is in the back," said the sergeant. "It's not very big, maybe seven or eight cells. If they go straight to the airport they'll take 69 South, this way, turn right on Little Boulder Road, left on North Whitetail Road, and then there they are."

"We'll have to intercept them once they get off 69," said Bobby. "Any place we can set up an ambush along there?"

"I'd say our best bet would be either when they turn onto Little Boulder Road off the main highway, or turn off Little Boulder onto Whitetail," said Sweeney, pointing. "They'll have to slow down a bit when they turn. We figuring on only one car?"

"Depends on whether or not Lomax is helping the FBI and gives them an escort," said Bobby. "If it's just those two droids and their toy soldier, that's one thing. If there's local deputies and the sheriff himself present, that's going to ratchet things up. Our intel says Lomax has twelve full-time deputies and about twenty part-timers. We've got nine men. Sorry, Tasha, I have to leave somebody here to answer the phone."

"I did my national service in the Amazons, sir," said Guardswoman Tasha Briggs in a sour voice.

"Yes, ma'am, I know, but you're also the mother of two boys and a girl, and I'm not risking their mother getting killed or captured in an international incident. Sorry, Tash, old-fashioned chivalry wins out tonight. Corporal Sweeney, you seem to know the most about the ins and outs of things in American Jefferson. How much help do you think Lomax will give the feebs, knowing as he does the bad blood it's going to cause between his side of the Road and ours?"

"Honest to God, sir, I just don't know," Sweeney told them. "Yeah, Ben has always tried to keep everything damped down and mellow, and he's bent a lot of his own kind's rules to do it, but he has to balance that with staying on the right side of Governor Wellman and that scurvy crew in Billings, plus he has to get re-elected every four years. He has his own red lines, and he doesn't like the Selkirks. John does have a tendency to show his butt a bit when he's cruising through their side

on the way back from a run. Ben doesn't want a war with the Republic on his turf, but he won't back down beyond a certain point. What that point is, I don't know. We may find out tonight."

"It would sure help if we had more intel," said Bobby. "I know what you said about your cousin, but we're going in almost blind. I'll lay out a plan, but while I'm doing it you need to go up to my office and make some calls to some of our other ears Over There and see if they can be of any help."

"Got it, boss."

Bobby turned back to the map. "This is going to be tricky. We're trying to intercept at least one vehicle, but maybe more, facing we don't know how many armed opponents, along a route we're not sure of and where we're going to have to deploy in the dark on unfamiliar terrain, plus we don't even have any real timeframe to work with. The only thing we know right now is that our hostage is now in a holding cell in the sheriff's office, or maybe back in the jail section itself. Add to that an almost overriding political consideration demanding that we keep local Jefferson County casualties to a bare minimum, or better yet to zero. I'd really like to hit that jail directly, as fast as possible, within the next hour, since that's the only place we can be sure of Johnny's location, but there's no way in hell we can storm a defensive position like that when we don't even know the layout, against an unknown number of hostiles, when we've got only nine men."

"Thirty-six," said a voice in the doorway. Bobby looked up and saw former NVA Captain Ray Selkirk standing in the doorway. He was wearing a set of obsolete old-pattern NDF tiger-stripe camos from the War of Independence, topped with a battered and stained slouch hat that looked like it had been trampled by buffalos. His armament was a bit antiquated as well, with a Browning 10-millimeter automatic on his hip and a U.S. Marine KA-BAR knife on his web belt, while slung over his shoulder was an older-model X-3 rifle, probably from the Seven Weeks War. Virtually every household in the Republic had one or two of those lying around since they had been superceded by the X-4, and the NDF had plumped their budget by selling off the Threes as surplus. "You got thirty-six men now. Well, thirty-three men and three women, to be accurate," Selkirk announced. "That's if you want

to throw in with us. Otherwise, me and the family's going over there to get John on our own."

Bobby walked down the short hall and opened the door. Under the lights outside he saw a long caravan of trucks and cars filling the street, some levitational and some ordinary ground vehicles, and a large party of people standing along the sidewalk. They were dressed in various bits and pieces of NDF surplus, jeans and work clothes, mostly broad-brimmed headgear, and in one case a young man in a track suit. All of them were packing heavy, mostly their NDF reservists' military weapons, although there were one or two Winchesters and civilian model hunting rifles with telescopic sights. Three men in the back of the pickup truck had a bipod-mounted splat gun resting on the roof of the cab. "What kind of ammo have you got for the splat gun?" asked Bobby.

"Anti-personnel, HE, and both red and white phosphorus incendiaries," Selkirk told him. "A case of each, which is SOP reserve requirement. That's my second oldest son Ned, his boy Faron and Faron's friend, Sam Cowley. They crew the weapon in their reserve unit, Fourth Battalion, 84th Regiment, so they know what they're doing. We've also got a couple of my nephews down there who are crackerjack rifle grenadiers, and they brought their chunkers."

"You planning on getting John out of jail or slaughtering half of Boulder?" asked Bobby.

"Whatever it takes," said Selkirk.

"They're sending a copter to take him to Billings," said Bobby.

"I figured. That's why we don't have time to turn this into a long debate about law and jurisdiction and who's job it is to do what," said Selkirk. "We're going over, with you or without you. Might actually be better if we went without. Look, son, I know this could blow up in our faces. I don't think it could cause another war, because they don't have anything to fight with anymore, and they've got so many troubles of their own they can't afford to sweat a little thing like this. But it's not a little thing to us. If they get that young fool of a grandson of mine out of here to Billings, then we're going to have to go after him in Billings, and that's going to start all kinds of bad balls rolling for this part of the world. If they get him out of Billings and into some prison

factory where we can't get to him at all, or more likely if he dies in custody, then that's going to re-open all the old wounds. Anybody on their side of the Road who assisted is going to be in our bad books, and I can't guarantee that all the tit-for-tat shit won't start up again along the border here. We've all had enough of that, and things have been quiet for a long time, but then that she-boon and her American gun thugs had to come in here and start swaggering around like they were somebody and they meant something, shoving people around like none of the past forty years ever happened. Now they've taken a member of my family. That ain't gonna happen. But we're just ordinary folks. You and your boys are Northwest cops, and if you come Over The Road with us tonight, the government of the Republic will be implicated, and that will take this mess to a lot higher level."

"I know it," said Bobby. "The trouble is that as representatives of the NAR we *are* involved, because one of our own has been seized and subjected to the authority of the United States of America again, and that is something we will not tolerate. I know you're the last man I should be lecturing on the whys and wherefores of the revolution, sir, but we were taught in our History and Moral Philosophy classes in school, in the army, and then again in the Civil Guard training course, that the reason this country exists is not only to provide a Homeland for all the world's Aryan peoples, but insofar as we can to provide *protection* for whites against those who want us to disappear from the face of the earth. That was the whole crux of that incident with Admiral Leach and the *Spokane* down in New Zealand a while back, remember?"

"You're talking about the Morehouse Doctrine," commented Selkirk.

"Yes, exactly," agreed Bobby, "A white man is in danger from the *weltfeind,* I have the resources to at least attempt to do something about it, and I can't sit idly by. But sir, with all due respect, if we go together then it's my party and I'm in charge, precisely because I *do* have official rank and standing. This needs to be done as an official act of the Republic, to show the world the price of assault and insult, not some act of old-style vigilantism. That being said, I'd appreciate your experience and expert advice. We'll just call you a consultant."

"Fair enough," replied Selkirk with a chuckle. "I agree, this should be an official act. Personally, I think when we went Over There twenty-eight years ago, we should have stayed, and gone on to Billings and Bozeman and run their asses out of there too, and kept it all. No offense, son, but do you intend to call your dad and that uncle of yours with the trenchcoat and let them know what's going on?"

"No," said Bobby, who had been kicking around the idea but decided against it. "I'm just a Guard lieutenant, but my father is the commander of the entire Border District, and my uncle is a senior state security officer. If this goes south they may need some plausible deniability. I know all your relatives there will be reservists, but anybody special who could make themselves useful?"

"They're not just relatives. We do have a few friends, you know," said Selkirk. He pointed to an old man of almost his own age. "Dave Evans was with me in the Regulators. He's not quite spry enough for the field these days, arthritis, and his eyes ain't what they used to be, but he can do anything else that needs doing. Everybody over about the age of forty-five was in the Seven Weeks."

"Reserve officers and specialists?"

"Myself, of course, then there's Dave, and my son Ray Junior, who's also Johnny's father. My third son Joe Lee is a warrant officer in the engineers, so he knows how to blow stuff up real good. Finally, over there's my great-nephew Cullen who's a color sergeant in the SS. He happened to be home on leave tonight at the house when the call came in."

"Bring them in with us," said Bobby. "We need to get a move on."

When they got inside, Bobby addressed the group. "Right, guys, looks like we're going to have a little more manpower than we thought at first. We now have enough personnel to attempt an extraction from the Jefferson County sheriff's facility with some hope of success, but we are still desperately short of intel as to who's doing what over there. I have Corporal Sweeney upstairs trying to locate somebody who is willing to go into town and keep an eye on things for us, either for payment or to try and avert bloodshed on our part of the Border tonight and in the future, but I don't think he's had any luck so far. By

the way, how did you find out about your grandson's capture, Captain Selkirk?"

"Danielle Tolliver called me. She was there when it happened."

"Ah. Do you think she would be willing to help us further, by giving us intel from on the ground?"

"Farm and ranch families go to bed early," said Selkirk. "She said she'd wait until everybody was in bed, then see if she could lift the keys to one of their trucks and come into town. If that old bastard Elwood Tolliver hears her leave he'll figure out what she's up to and he'll come after her, so he'll probably be running around over there as well."

"All right, we need to get on with this," said Bobby. He diddled one of the operations room's computers and a large blueprint appeared on the wall. "This is the schematic we have for the Jefferson County sheriff's office. We need to know whether John Selkirk is being held in the actual jail itself, or in one of two holding cells in the processing area, what they used to call the bullpen, I believe, because that will affect our entry. If he's in the bullpen it's quickest to just bust through the front door and walk right in. If he's in the detention section itself then there is a short corridor with heavy steel security doors at both ends. If one of them shuts those doors on us, then we're not getting through without blasting, and maybe killing or injuring anyone who's in the jail wing, including young Selkirk."

"I've shot my way both in and out of that that jail a few times in the past," said old man Selkirk. "Yeah, I know, it was forty years ago, back before the PATUs took over the developmental center on Main Street and turned that into their main barracks and lockup, and the county may have renovated or changed things, but there used to be a kind of shipping and receiving area in the back here, with a small parking lot. They had cameras on it in those days, but one of the first things the NVA did when we entered an operational area was cruise around at night with some twenty-twos and infrared sights and take out all the spy cameras we could find, everywhere from convenience stores to government parking lots. Don't know if they ever put the cameras back in after the first war."

"They did, Captain, but they don't have any inside monitors," said Sweeney, who had come back downstairs. "The ones they had broke

years ago and nobody ever got around appropriating the budget to fix them. One of our contacts Over There tells us they record, but you have to take the memory stick out and plug it into a monitor to see what's on it."

"That's Americans all over. They waste untold wealth on things they don't need, yet they won't spend a few pennies for the things they do need," snorted Selkirk. "If we could get into the building that way without being detected, then there is a stairwell along this wall here that goes right up into the jail section," he went on, pointing. "Only one steel door, and it's not as thick and strong as the ones going in and out of the main office. This place was built almost a hundred years ago, remember, and it was meant to be a holding facility for drunks, petty criminals, and the occasional chicken thief and stock rustler, not Alcatraz. It never held any of us Volunteers worth a damn, which is why the Patties built their own dungeon over there on Main."

Cullen Selkirk from the SS spoke up. "Lieutenant, if the door is still like Pop described it to me, I have some plastique I can rig that will blow it off its hinges without too much concussion or injury to people inside."

"We still need to find out if they've bothered to take John back into the jail itself, or if they're just cooling his heels in one of those little bullpen cages until the copter lands out at the airport," said Bobby. "Any luck, Mike?"

"Roxy isn't answering, which I take to mean she likes her job too much or else she's scared this thing might escalate into bloodshed," said Corporal Sweeney. "I found a couple of guys who are willing to scout for us, but they're way out in the county or in American Butte, and it will take them time to get down to Boulder. Couple of hours, maybe."

"Give me one of our cars and let me go Over There and set up an observation post," offered Cullen Selkirk. "I can get up onto the roof of the high school and watch the place with infrared field glasses."

"Too dangerous, Cull," said Selkirk, shaking his head. "They don't know you Over There, and those who do know that you're one of ours, and you got no business being anywhere in Boulder at night,

never mind up on the roof of Jefferson High with a pair of night-vision glasses."

"I agree, Color Sergeant," said Bobby. "If Sheriff Lomax is giving the FBI his active support in this little project, then he'll have all his men out patrolling and watching for a rescue attempt."

"Is Lomax backing their play on this or not?" asked Ray.

"We don't know," said Bobby, shaking his head. "It seems clear that grabbing John was just something these FBI agents did off their own bat, in an effort to recover that stupid nigger's luxury sedan she left over here when she came visiting, and so I doubt the sheriff is best pleased. But legally speaking he is still obliged to render all due assistance to federal law enforcement, blah, blah, blah. A lot is going to depend on how much assistance he feels obliged to render them in fact. What we really need is for somebody to get inside the sheriff's office and check things out visually, which is what I had Danny Tolliver in mind for, as reluctant as I am to place a teenaged girl at risk. But she's the only one we've got on our team, or apparently on our team, who can just walk into the cop-shop over there. Once we can determine John's exact location, we'll have to wing it. If we can't get a twenty on him we may have to hit them from two sides at once."

"We had to do it like that once, back in the day," said Selkirk.

"How did you do that?" asked Bobby. "Would a re-play work? Anybody around who might remember it and warn Lomax how to get ready for it?"

"Elwood Tolliver is all," said Selkirk. "Anyway, here's my suggestion, being your consultant and all, young fellow. First off, we don't all cross the Road in one big convoy. That's how Jack Smith fucked up in Helena that time. We have to assume Lomax is waiting for us, or they've got that British merc advising them who presumably has at least some idea of what he's doing tactically. None of us should enter Boulder via Depot Hill Road, that turns into Second Avenue. That's they way they'll be expecting us to come. We need to divide into two sections. One of us crosses over the Border Highway onto Cattle Drive Road, here, about a mile west of town."

"There's no road crossing at that point on the map," said Bobby.

"It's there, trust me," said Selkirk. "The other section needs to cross to the north of the town, over onto Frontage Road at mile marker one-six-four. Yeah, I know, it's not on the map either. There used to be an interstate exit there. The PATUs blocked it off back in the day because they wanted to be able to control entrance and exit onto the interstate with as little manpower as they had, but we unofficially re-opened it. Never mind, Cullen or Ned can show you. Let's say my group goes over onto Cattle Drive Road and your section crosses at one-six-four onto Frontage."

"So we go into town down North Main Street and you enter up South Main Street at the same time?" asked Bobby. "Even this late at night, won't somebody see us? And if Sheriff Lomax has got his deputies out patrolling and watching for any company coming, we'll damned sure be detected!"

"I know, that's why both sections avoid Main Street," said Selkirk. "Your group needs to get here, to Faith Lutheran Church on Third Avenue, and my people need to get to Boulder Elementary School, also on Third. Don't worry, there won't be any kids around this time of night, and both of them have parking lots for our vehicles facing Third, with buildings between them and the sheriff's office for concealment. We park, leave a couple of vehicle guards, then approach the sheriff's station from the east and west sides of the building. It's mostly offices and storefronts along South Washington, so shouldn't be too many people looking out their windows at this time of night."

"Then what?" asked Bobby.

"If there is any way at all somebody of ours can get eyes on Johnny and see whether he's in a jail cell or a squad room cage, that's the way we go in. If not, on my—my apologies, Lieutenant, on your signal, I *suggest* we go in from both ends, as quickly and quietly as possible until somebody kicks up a fuss. Your party through the front door, my team through the rear entrance and up the stairs into the jail wing, presuming it's still there."

Bobby spoke up. "We'll take our police hand-rams to break down any locked doors. I don't like this. Insufficient planning, poor intel, and time constraints, but if we don't get moving right now, that damned helicopter may beat us to Johnny. All right, everybody get this, and

Captain Selkirk, you make sure your clansmen out there get it. This is a hostage rescue, not a retaliatory strike or an NVA tickle. Our object is to recover your grandson and bring him home, but it is almost as important that we do it while inflicting as few casualties as possible on the residents of Boulder, Montana, and that includes Ben Lomax and his deputies. The FBI agents and their New Model Army buddy and that plug-ugly negress who defiled our door the other day are all fair game. You want revenge, shoot them if you can, but unless you have no choice, don't hurt any of the locals. I'd rather not start something tonight everybody around here is still going to be dealing with another forty years from now. Let's go."

It took about half an hour for the two Northwest war parties to slip across the Border Highway and roll as quietly as they could into place at their respective staging areas in front of the church and the school. It was almost ten p.m. when they began moving into whatever cover they could find around the rear of the sheriff's station, slipping across South Washington Street to conceal themselves behind fences and trees and whatever offered any concealment from the front. Bobby was worried someone would see them and raise the alarm or even fire a shot, but the small-town stereotypes about rolling up the sidewalks at night seemed to fit Boulder to a T. At ten o'clock on a chilly night with autumn coming on, there didn't seem to be anybody around; it occurred to Bobby that most people were probably already in bed by now. Bobby and Ray Selkirk used their phones for communication. "You see anybody posted on sentry duty out back?" Bobby asked old Ray. He kept his voice low.

"That's negatory," replied Selkirk. "You?"

"Negative as well," Bobby told him. "I can't see anybody on the roof."

"Me neither."

"Sweeney tells me he just got a call from his cousin Roxy, and Lomax sent her home for the evening to get her away from temptation, as he put it, so that's one potential source of intel gone. Did you get hold of the girl? We need to get some eyes inside that cop-shop," asked Bobby.

"I did," confirmed old Ray. "I explained what we needed, and I gave her my word that if she couldn't help us, there would be no protest and no bad blood, because I understood I was asking her to go against her own family and upbringing and it was something I had no right to do. She agreed to try. She's using some cheap phone she got from a vending machine so I can't conference her in with you, but she took the family car and hid the keys of the other vehicles, so that will slow down any pursuit. She's about two minutes out. She's going to try to get in to see Johnny, and she'll call me with whatever she can find out. She says once we get him she wants to come back Home with us," added old Selkirk.

Bobby frowned. "Captain, I wonder, does this kid know what she's doing, or is she just some teenaged flake who thinks she's having a romantic adventure?"

"She sounds to me like she understands," replied Selkirk. "The Tollivers never were regular Amurrican bozos and flakes, they were just dumb as a bag of hammers when it came to race and politics."

"Can you see any sign of life in there at all?" asked Bobby, examining the lit but closed window blinds of the station with his night vision, unable even to detect any movement inside.

"Couple of deputies just came out back and lit up cigarettes," said Selkirk. "I thought when the Americans un-banned tobacco they also stopped forcing people outside to smoke."

A large older-model Celestial, a station wagon of Chinese manufacture, pulled up to the front of the sheriff's office beside the squad cars. "Hang on, this must be Danielle," said Bobby. He watched as a small figure in a shepherd's coat got out of the vehicle and marched inside with a determined stride. "Hope they don't decide to arrest her and put her in a cell, too."

Danny in fact walked right into the bull pen in the middle of an argument between Sheriff Ben Lomax and Monty Sanderson on the one hand, and Gabrielle Martine, and Special Agent Mona James on the other. The small group was being observed by almost half a dozen Jefferson County sheriff's deputies who leaned on desks or walls around the coffee pot, watching with interest. "I don't care if your colleagues in Billings can't or won't keep their helicopters operational!" Lomax was

snarling at the two Womyn of Color. "I want this prisoner the hell out of here, tonight, and if that means you have to drive him all the way to Billings yourselves in that damned Lexus, then do it. You're not leaving him here for another twenty-four hours while some bureaucrat in Billings okays servicing the chopper and signs the voucher or whatever the problem is. Once word gets out that he's here, we're going to have an armed gang of his relatives coming over here to try and break him out, or maybe a full-scale commando raid by their military, and there will be a bloodbath right here in my station house."

"All because you wanted your goddamned car back, which you shouldn't have lost because you should never have set foot Over There in the first place!" rumbled Sanderson angrily.

"He's your collar and he's your responsibility, federal jurisdiction as you keep reminding me," Lomax went on, "So you need to get him out of here, and do whatever the hell you're going to do with him. But I'm not sending any of my own men with you. I'm going to need all of them here to deal with the consequences of what you've done."

"Sheriff, we don't need to ask your permission to apprehend a federal felon in your county," explained Mona James, trying to be reasonable and calming. "It's true that advance notification is customary, but not required when time is a factor."

"Your attitude has been noted, Sheriff!" whined Gabi Martine. "Oh yes, it's been noted."

"Note away, ma'am," said Lomax. "I don't give a damn any more."

"I didn't know you spoke chimpanzee, Ben," said Johnny Selkirk, who was leaning lazily against the bars in one of the small bullpen holding cells.

"Shut up, Johnny!" snapped Lomax. FBI Agent Earl Hornbuckle leaned over and jabbed Johnny through the bars with an electric cattle prod he'd gotten from somewhere; Selkirk shouted and swore and tried to grab the prod even while he was doubled up, but Hornbuckle jabbed at him swiftly and repeatedly between the bars. Danny screamed and ran toward the cell. Lomax turned, his face furious. He jumped forward, grabbed the cattle prod out of Hornbuckle's hand, and threw

it across the room. "Do that one more time and I'll ram that thing up your ass!" he roared at Hornbuckle.

"But you just admitted he's our prisoner, in our custody, federal jurisdiction," protested Hornbuckle sullenly.

"He's in my jail now, much as I don't want him to be, and I'm not allowing you FBI shitheads to torture prisoners in my custody!" Lomax replied coldly. "This isn't forty years ago and you no longer have an army of FATPO goons you can use to threaten local law enforcement officers into knuckling under." He turned back to Mona James. "Get him out of here, now," he told her. "Use your own car, not one of the county's, and get your asses on the road to Billings right now, or I'm letting him go."

"Like fuck you be letting his white ass go!" screamed Gabi Martine. "Dat crackuh muthafukka done boosted my ride!" Under stress Gabi lost her proper diction. She was under stress a lot lately, and more and more she was pelting all those around her with muthafukkas.

"There's eight of us in this building, and only four of you," Lomax reminded Gabi with a scowl. Then he looked over and saw Danielle crying and hugging Johnny through the bars. "Oh, just beautiful!" he sighed. "Juliet has come to say farewell to Romeo."

Mona James reached out and grabbed Danny by the collar, pulling her away from the bars. "Step away from the prisoner! Sheriff, this woman may have given him a weapon or a communication device! They both need to be strip-searched!"

"Great! Then I'd have Elwood Tolliver trying to bushwhack me as well as Ray Selkirk!" growled Lomax. "Bullshit! There's going to be no strip-searching. Go get whatever car you're going to use to take this man to Billings, come back, and then get him out of here!"

"I've already sent Colonel Hart to bring one of his armored SUVs," said Mona. "But I still say . . ."

Lomax grabbed Danny away from her. "You, young lady, come with me." He dragged her over to Roxy the dispatcher's office and threw her inside. "You and I need to have a little talk, Danny, and I'll be back here in a bit. In the meantime you stay here and don't leave the building. I don't want to have to try and explain to your grandfather how you disappeared out of a police station!" He closed the door and

stalked away. However foolish and infuriating Danny's thoughtless behavior appeared to Lomax, it simply never occurred to him that she could be in league with the demons from Across The Road, much less spying for them. Not a Tolliver girl; it was unthinkable.

Danny flipped open her burner phone and dialed. "Johnny's in one of the squad room cells," she whispered.

"All right, honey," said Selkirk. "Can you get out of there?"

"Not really," she said.

"Say again? They didn't arrest you, did they?"

"No," she told him. "Not yet. But Sheriff Lomax said he wanted to talk to me. He put me in this office and told me not to leave."

"Mmm, good, at least you'll be out of the way. Is there a desk or something you can take cover behind?" asked Ray.

"Yes, sir."

"Okay, when you hear the ruckus start, you do that. We'll find you when it's over. Thank you, Danny."

"Just get Johnny out of here safely," she said.

Ray told Bobby and his team out in front what Danny had seen. "He's in the bullpen. Ready to move?" he asked.

"That's an awful lot of hostiles, and local men at that," mused Bobby. "We could use a diversion to try and draw some of them away. Captain, you got those nephews of yours with the chunkers? Any vehicles in that back lot you can go pyrotechnic on?"

"Sure," said Selkirk. "Their paddy wagon and eight or nine deputies' personal cars. We can blow up Ben Lomax's Plains Rover, if you want."

"No, try not to piss him off any more than he's gonna be anyway," said Bobby. "Crack the paddy wagon. When they come out, don't open fire on them or try to pin them down. That will cause casualties. Come around the building to Washington Street and follow me in through the front. Look, give me two minutes, okay? I want to try something to see if we can't cut the bloodletting down a bit."

"Okay, son, two minutes, then paddy wagon go boom," said Selkirk. "You sure you know what you're doing?"

"It'll come to me," said Bobby. He dialed Ben Lomax's hotline phone, hoping the sheriff hadn't thrown the phone into the nearest

dumpster, or left it in his other uniform trousers. It rang and rang, and Bobby was about to hang up when Lomax answered.

"What?" The sheriff's voice was calm, presumably because there were others in earshot, but he didn't sound pleased.

"You owe me a favor," said Bobby.

"I do, but I know what you want, and it's out of my hands," said Lomax.

"Yeah, it's in my hands now," said Bobby. "In about a minute you're going to hear a loud noise in the rear of your station. Go out back and investigate it. Take all of your deputies with you. *All* of them, got it?"

"And if I don't?" asked Lomax.

"Then we'll see how it plays out. If you feel your duty to your men and your community demands that you be involved in this, then good luck, and I mean that. I just figured I'd let you know. One white man to another."

"Thanks." Lomax hung up.

Ray Selkirk's nephews apparently had itchy trigger fingers; it was only a few more seconds afterward that two armor-piercing rifle grenades slammed out of the darkness into the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department prisoner transport van and it exploded into a ball of fire. "Okay, you men whom I designated as Gold Team, set up a perimeter around the Washington Street entrance and don't let anybody except our own people in, which is anybody wearing a Civil Guard uniform or who is related to you. *Go!"* ordered Bobby.

The front door was locked, but the brawny Sergeant Boardman swung the hand-ram and smashed it open, and the Northwest group ran past the empty reception desk and down a short corridor to the squad room, where they stopped. Bobby pulled a stun grenade off his belt. "John?" he called out.

"Two nigger women and one buzz-cut boo-yah!" shouted Johnny. "The limey's not here!"

"Shut the fuck up, puerco!" screamed Mona James, somewhere out of sight around the doorjamb.

"John! Jelly roll coming in!" called Bobby, knowing Selkirk would recognize the military term for a stun grenade and cover his ears.

"Got it!" Johnny yelled back.

Bobby threw the grenade and it detonated with a flash and a thunderclap. He and his team moved in. "Boardman! Get the rear doors!" The sergeant ran forward to make sure the doors to the jail section were locked, so Lomax and his men couldn't re-enter the squad room that way. Bobby had his service automatic out. Agent Hornbuckle raised his head over a desk where he had taken cover and fired at him once, missing. Behind Bobby, the SS sergeant Cullen Selkirk shot Hornbuckle through the head once with his X-3 rifle. Mona James threw down her pistol and fled screaming down a short corridor which turned out to be a dead end; at least a dozen bullets splattered red goo over the locked door before she flopped down into a heap. Bobby found Gabi Martine hiding under a desk. He dragged her out by her hair, screaming fucks and muthafukkas, and he shot her twice between her bouncing black mammaries at point blank range. She gurgled and flopped and rolled over a desk onto the floor.

Cullen Selkirk said "Never shot a nigger before," and eased his rifle barrel over to put a *coup de grace* between Gabi's gasping spoon lips.

"No, wait," said Bobby. "I don't want her face messed up." He pulled his own large Bowie knife from the sheath on his belt, grabbed the gooey lacquered negroid hair which was now dripping with blood, and with a few swift, forceful strokes he severed the negress's head, causing a gush of blood to go cascading out onto the floor from the decapitated carcass. "Watch your feet, guys!" Bobby called out in warning. He glanced around and saw that the waste paper baskets at each desk had black plastic bags inserted in them; he grabbed several of them and double-bagged the head, tying them shut. He looked up. Ray Selkirk was coming in the door. "Captain Selkirk, find the keys and get your grandson out of here."

"No keys. It's an electronic lock. There's a button under that desk there," said Johnny, pointing. "You're not going to stuff that and mount it, are you, Lieutenant? That's weird, even for one of us."

"No, I have another use for it," said Bobby.

"What's in the bag?" asked old man Ray.

"Nigger head," said Bobby.

"You a collector?" asked Ray. "I knew some Volunteers back in the day who collected nigger ears and whatnot. Never whole heads, though."

"No, I'm not going to keep it," said Bobby. "This she-boon came to our house over there, and it still pisses me off, even if I did let her go for political reasons. I think I see a way to rectify that error. Where are Lomax and his guys?"

"Out back watching their paddy wagon burn, and moving their cars out of the lot so they don't get damaged if anything else blows," said Ray. "They'll take their time, but we need to go. Don't want to embarrass the man too badly."

"We need to find Danny," said Johnny, opening the door to the office. The girl ran out and embraced him. "Are you all right?" he asked.

"Are you?" she demanded,

"Fine."

"Miss Tolliver?" said the old man, stepping forward. "I'm Raymond Selkirk, John's grandfather. If you were serious about returning to the Republic with us, we need to go now. We're not quite out of the woods yet."

"You better come with us, Danny," said John, his arm around her. "If your grandfather finds out you helped us, he's going to kill you. Maybe for real."

"How do you know I helped you?" asked Danny.

"It was you who called Pop, wasn't it?" said John.

"Who told you?" exclaimed Danny.

"Nobody told me," said Johnny. "Who else would it be?"

"You should come with us, Miss Tolliver," said Ray. "I know your grandfather. When he finds out you have not only betrayed your country, as he insists on viewing it, but you did so for a member of my family and by contacting me, it's probably not a good idea for you to be within his reach at that moment."

"I know," said Danny sadly. "Where would I live?"

"We've got a good government guest house outside Basin," said Bobby. "My own family stays there when they visit."

"Horse hockey," said Ray. "This family is in your debt, ma'am. You'll stay with us out at our place, as an honored guest, where we can keep an eye on you for you in case there are any repercussions from this side of the Road, and where John's mother can keep an eye on both of you." Johnny's eyebrows lifted and his eyes widened; Bobby got the impression that he would almost have preferred the custody of the FBI. "We'll show you the ropes over there on our side. If you want to set up on your own for a while, we'll help you with that. If you and John decide you want to join our family, then we'll do that as well. But right now we need to get the hell out of here, before Ben Lomax remembers he's a sheriff."

* * *

On their way out of town, the Northwest convoy passed New Model Army Colonel Malcolm Hart driving toward the jail with the armored vehicle he had been sent to collect to take the prisoner John Selkirk to Billings. Hart didn't recognize any of the faces in the vehicles that passed him in the autumn night, until he got a brief glimpse of Danny Tolliver, and he knew that something had happened. Five minutes later he was standing over the mound of bloody rags that was Mona James' corpse. "You did *nothing at all?*" he demanded of Ben Lomax, his voice calm but of freezing Arctic coldness. "There's a word for men like that, Sheriff. Men who stand aside and let women be murdered. They are called cowards. It's a pity you don't follow the Republic's practice of dueling on this side of the Road. One of the few of their customs I could stomach."

"Listen to me," said Lomax, furious with Hart not just because of his words but because he wasn't sure there was no truth in them. "I have told you before, but now you need to get it even more. *We don't want America here.* We never did, and I'm not just talking about the past few months. Truth be told, we didn't want you here forty-five years ago when Coeur d'Alene went up, and a long time before that. It's just that some of us decided to act on those feelings back then and some didn't.

"You say you were coming here to bring us all these new jobs and money and new opportunities to have better lives here and keep our kids from running off to the Ring Burbs when they left school, and

that's fine, but you did it in a way which was deliberately calculated to spit right in the face of these people whom we have to live side by side with, without chopping each other to pieces, which is what's happened in the past. You didn't come here to bring us a damned thing. You came here to start a fight. Why, I don't know, but you did, and you can't complain now when you got what you came for. A fight you lost, which I could have told you is usually the way it goes. I'm sorry about your friends and about Agent James, I know you were knocking boots together, but what you see here is what happens when you fuck with the Northmen, and you fucked with the Northmen. I think you should get back in your car and light out for Billings. I'd say your mission here is over."

"Not quite," said Hart angrily. He walked outside and flipped open his phone, and he dialed a number in the fortified Green Zone of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, now a major refuge for white people fleeing from Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and the badlands of New Jersey. "Yes? May I speak to Captain Jones, please? Colonel Malcolm Hart." He waited a bit. "Trevor? Malcolm here. I was wondering if you could get a few of the lads together and come out to Montana for a day or two. No, this is a purely personal matter. Some very unpleasant chaps have killed someone whom I was quite fond of, and I would like to return the favor. I'll tell you when you get here. Let's say that a certain Nation is about to lose a Daughter."

XXXVII

"I Knew This Day Would Come"

(40 Years, 11 months and seven days after Longview)

Our duty is to preserve what the past has to say for itself, and so say for ourselves what shall be true in the future.
—John Ruskin

In the days following the nighttime cross-border raid, Lieutenant Robert Campbell III was concerned that he was going to be called up before a disciplinary review board for violating American territory, even though there were no immediate violent repercussions and the civil authorities on the Boulder side seemed to be taking a "least said, soonest mended" attitude toward the incident. The death of two FBI agents and an Affikin-Amurkin Power Womyn didn't bother the NAR authorities in the least, but Bobby had risked his own men being killed or, even more embarrassingly, captured, which would have necessitated a further escalation on the Republic's part wherein things might have spiraled genuinely out of control. In the Guard van on their way back into the Republic that night, Bobby had made sure that Johnny Selkirk understood what a lucky escape he'd had, and told him, "From now on, John, your blockade-running days are over. For some months, anyway, until everything settles down and those feds from Burlington clear out completely. You stay the hell on this side of the border. I'm not coming over and dragging your ass out of there again."

"Neither am I," old Ray added.

A little over two weeks after the incursion, Colonel Robert Campbell and Bobby's Uncle Tom from BOSS came out to Basin again, and assured him that the Justice Minister had ruled in his favor. "He could hardly do otherwise, considering the way General Bill Vitale strolls over the border into Aztlan any time he pleases," remarked Major Horakova. "Besides, you're covered by Morehouse." He meant that the Republic's well-known Morehouse Doctrine, which had been endorsed by Parliament at the time of its introduction as an official policy and re-affirmed on several occasions since then, had been held to apply in Johnny Selkirk's case, despite the somewhat less than clear circumstances.

"The Morehouse Doctrine asserts that the Republic has two primary missions, providing a Homeland for white people here, and protecting them abroad to the best of our capability," his father told him. "That capability has become pretty formidable down through the years, but occasionally our multifarious enemies need reminding who's the meanest dog in the junkyard. Which you did with great panache I might add, and not a single Northwest casualty. Good work, son. Why should the Circus have all the fun?"

"You guys ought to book a permanent suite at the guest house, you're out here so often," commented Bobby.

"We have, actually," said Tom Horakova. "I'm also going to be asking for a cubbyhole of some kind down at your Guard station. You're going to be seeing quite a bit of us, especially me. We want to keep an eye on whatever is roiling and boiling Over The Road in this sector, especially with all this recent sound and fury. That British mercenary Hart is still sleazing around over there, for one thing, and I can't figure out why. He bears watching. As little as we like having the FBI this close, the NMA we like even less. We need to try and find some way to work this so they bring all the jobs and money and yuppies fleeing diversity right up to our doorstep, but they leave their gun thugs behind."

"Uh, technically, since American Jefferson is out of the country, wouldn't that be WPB or CMI jurisdiction, not BOSS?" asked Bobby.

"Combined Military Intelligence concentrates on military matters, intel and analysis, so forth and so on," Horakova told him. "The Circus, on the other hand, tends to gravitate to where the heavy political and economic action is going on. In the old days that meant the cities like New York and Chicago and whatnot, but since the cities became zoos and the Jews and influentials fled to the second-tier latté towns, WPB followed them. Since they evacuated the Manhattan Green Zone some years ago, D.C. is about the only traditional American city that still has a Circus station now, I believe. Well, okay, American Houston, as well. But these days the Circus acrobats mostly hang out in Burlington, Cambridge, the Hamptons, Ottawa, Fredericksburg, the Raleigh-Durham RTP, Montreal, Columbus, Denver and Aspen, Omaha, places like that. Basically they follow the Jews. So far what's been happening here is a minor sideshow, and Vince is happy to hand it off to BOSS, since we're right over the border and can coordinate."

"So now what?" asked Bobby.

"Hopefully, now nothing," said his father. "The government in Burlington may or may not decide to continue with the Prosperity Zone thingie, depending on how ticked off they are about us killing their pets, but my guess is they'll go ahead with it. The Americans still need to resuscitate their commerce and industry, and they can't do that anywhere near festering sinkholes that might boil over any time with angry and starving mud people. They really do need to scuttle out here with all their good stuff and the last of their white techie élite, and get their backs to the Road where they can shelter beneath the guns of the Republic in case their whole ball of wax crumbles into fragments."

"I have a question I just have to ask," said Tom Horakova. "Bobby, what in God's name did you do with the nigger head you took away that night?"

"You're not keeping it around the house where the kids might find it, are you?" asked his father anxiously.

"Good grief, no!" exclaimed Bobby Three. "I got creative with it. I had Sweeney drive down to Butte, cross over to the American side—he's got a day pass from some friend of his in the city cops down there—and from there he Fedexed the head to Seth Goldblum in Burlington, Vermont."

"The Director of the Office of Northwest Recovery?" laughed Bob senior.

"Yeah," said Bobby. "I was going to put a cutesy little post-it note on her forehead, but after thinking about it, I decided that would be overdoing it. I figure Goldblum will get the message, him and whoever else in Burlington who was involved in the fiasco of sending that creature out here."

"I'd love to be a fly on the wall when Seth or whoever opens that package!" chuckled Horakova. "It will probably hit the news Out There, as an example of what horrible savages we are, unless the régime decides to suppress the story altogether rather than admit they made a screw-up."

"How's young Danielle Tolliver doing since she Came Home?" asked Colonel Campbell.

"Okay, so far as I know," said Bobby. "We've had her over to dinner a couple of times, to make sure she feels welcome, since she had to leave her own home so abruptly. The kids like her. Ally works with her at school, helps her with her tutoring, and she's fairly well impressed."

"Danny's started classes at Cataract High?" asked Campbell senior.

"Yes," said Bobby. "Like a lot of new immigrant kids, she's going to have a hard time catching up. Most of her American education was unbelievably deficient by our standards—she was never taught how to multiply fractions or do long division in elementary school, although to be sure at least they did teach cursive writing in her fifth grade year, which is something. I understand that most American schools don't any more. Danny's high school science courses were about what we teach sixth graders, her language training was laughable and consisted basically of how to ask one's way to the cantina and the bathroom in Tijuana, there was of course no tracking at all by scholastic ability, no serious evaluation of her skills, or any attempt to determine what she is really good at in life and how she could become a productive citizen."

"That's a holdover from the days when there were niggers and Mexicans in Montana and the curriculum had to be dumbed-down to primate level," said Tom. "Nor could there be any tracking or student assessment which made blacks come out on the bottom, so they did

away with it. Kind of like dealing with the problem of constantly late trains by abolishing timetables. They actually did that in the United Kingdom in the last century, by the by."

Bobby went on: "Danny was told that Maya Angelou and the rap of Booga-Booga B constitute English literature, and needless to say, the history she has been taught Over There is one gigantic tissue of lies from beginning to end. Fortunately Danny seems to have spent most of her time for the past several years in home economics, auto shop, 4-H courses like animal husbandry and agricultural science, and she seems to have escaped the usual American adolescent ambition of running off to the city where she can live a life of debauchery away from family supervision and censure. She seems to be one of those girls who are just born good, with naturally healthy instincts."

"Her religion probably helps," commented Horakova. "You have to give them their due. I'm not a Christian myself, but once you get rid of the Zionism, it's not too bad a way to live. For generations past, down to this very day, the fact is that white Christian families in the United States are almost the only ones who still produce multiple children instead of the almost obligatory single child for liberal yuppies, if any. They still offer the best chance a white child has Out There to grow up straight and clean."

"If you don't count teaching those children to worship the most evil people on earth as gods," added Campbell senior grimly.

"Yeah, well, there is that," replied Horakova.

"You know how they call us all Nazis?" commented Bobby. "Just like we're not all Nazis, not all Christians worship the Jews."

"I wonder if Captain Selkirk is willing to concede that?" asked Campbell. "Jason Stockdale knew him back during the first war, and he told me a few stories about him. Ray does not take kindly to tub-thumpers, apparently. Apparently he was married fairly young and they really messed with the mind of his first wife."

"Well, Danielle is still staying out there at the Selkirk spread and she hasn't asked to move into town," said Bobby. "From what I hear the old man is treating her with courtesy and respect, which pretty much jibes with what I hear about him, so long as you don't get on the wrong side of him."

"John Selkirk going to marry her?" asked Bob senior. "He ought to, since she put her life on the line for him."

"Don't know," said Bobby. "Haven't asked. Not my jurisdiction."

* * *

Danny Tolliver was doing her best to adjust to her new situation in life, although she still had a distinct "through the looking glass" feel about everything. She had heard nothing from her mother and father and nothing from old Elwood, although admittedly they had taken away her phone so they had no way to get in touch unless they wanted to call the Selkirk home, which Danny thought unlikely. Johnny had given her another phone, and she could have called them, but she decided to let it be for a while until she found her feet and decided if she was on the right path or not. Hopefully time would heal the wound somewhat. She knew that in a goldfish bowl like this part of the border, her parents and her brother would know she was all right. Her grandfather probably didn't care any more. Danny was sure that to old Elwood she was just another spucky traitor now. It saddened her deeply, but she knew there could be no going back.

Johnny's mother Christina, a slim and strong woman who had been brought to the Republic from Sweden at age six as a refugee from mandatory Islam which would not allow girls to attend school, took Danny in with a perfunctory hug and put her to work milking and feeding the animals and the people around the ranch when she wasn't in school, just like the rest of the family teenagers. Danny was perceptive, and she understood that this wasn't John's mother being cold to her as an interloper, but Christina's way of accepting her as a member of the family.

Everyone assumed that she and John would be getting married in June before Danny went in for her Labor Service stint. The Selkirks gave her a nice room in their sprawling ranch compound, where she discovered first-hand how Northwesters tended to live in large extended families. Back in Boulder she had only one brother and no sister, but she soon realized that here she would have almost a dozen of each in more or less her age group, if one counted Johnny's brothers and sisters

plus assorted cousins and nephews and relations, not to mention all the older people who kept coming in and out all the time, and whom she despaired of ever keeping track of. She had experienced this on her first weekend at the Selkirk spread, when her new sisters and cousins had taken her down to Northwest Butte and gone on a shopping spree, fitting her out with a whole new wardrobe of hats, long dresses with full sleeves, new lace-up shoes that displayed no immodest ankles, and assorted hats.

She quickly learned that many of the things she had been told about the Northwest Republic from her childhood on weren't true, although some of them were. For one thing, not everybody walked around carrying guns and shooting each other in fast-draw contests in the street. "Our First Amendment guarantees the right to keep and bear arms, just like your Second Amendment used to do before Hillary, but it doesn't say you *have* to keep and bear arms," Johnny explained. "We know we have that right, absolutely and forever, so there's no need for us to be constantly proving it, and since we've got no niggers or spics there's no criminals to defend ourselves against, most people don't bother to carry."

School was hard in some respects, especially academically, since more often than not she didn't know half of what the teachers were talking about. But this problem was not unknown to the Northwest school system, which had a lot of practice in absorbing and upgrading ignorant white children who were coming into the country from schools where they had been taught nothing but useless and unmitigated drivel. Danny signed up for every extra tutoring program in school, and found she wasn't alone; there were several other new immigrant kids at Cataract whose parents had only recently managed to escape the travel regulations and hate laws in their own countries and flee to the Northwest. These included an English girl Danny's own age, a Finnish boy, and several East Canadians.

There was also a solemn girl of fifteen named Freda who was still learning English. Her native language was an odd, primitive dialect that puzzled and perturbed the local German-speaking community. Freda was possibly the last survivor of the Germans of Southwest Africa. Her parents were dead, and she had been raised by her great-grandfather

Hans, an engineer who had been held captive for years by a Herero warlord in order to keep his electrical equipment and toys running. When the girl had begun to mature at around age twelve, the old man knew what was in store for her, which was to be given to the mulatto Rehoboth Basters, who wanted to maintain their distinctive café-au-lait coloration. A princely bride-price of thirty cattle and twelve rifles had already been agreed upon with the Herero chief.

Hans had fled with his great-granddaughter into the Namib desert in one of the last of the warlord's functioning bakkies or pickup trucks, and they had made it into the arid Orange Free State where one of the scattered Afrikaner farm families who still survived in South Africa had taken them in. After enough adventures to write a book about, the two of them had been smuggled into the Republic, only to have the old man die in his first Northwest winter. Hans was ninety-two years old, yet having lived all his life in Africa he had never seen snow before. One afternoon Freda found him sitting in an armchair by the window in their Bureau of Race and Resettlement immigrants' apartment, his eyes staring out into a falling white curtain. The old man's last sight on earth was something he had known only from books and from the stories of the old people in his childhood who still had some memory of the Fatherland. In that sense, he had indeed Come Home.

Freda was adopted by a local German couple, and was just getting started at Cataract, a year late. She had a lot of catching up to do, but not as much as one might think. Old Hans had taught her how to read and write himself when she was a child, and tutored her in everything from history to outdated electrical circuitry, almost all of it from memory. The Herero would not let him have any of the crumbling books that were occasionally found in the ruins of white homes and buildings, for they feared these were the magical source of the white man's power, which of course they were.

Danny had been worried about making friends at Cataract High School, and afraid that she wouldn't be accepted by her new fellow students. She had grown from childhood believing that these people she now lived among were evil monsters, and she was pragmatic enough to understand that these young men and women had almost certainly been raised to think the same thing about her and her family. To her surprise,

she found she needn't have worried. Despite the increased population over the past four decades, Jefferson County, Montana, on the American side and what had once been Jefferson County on the other side of Interstate 15 were still two parts of a small rural community, and no border could stop the gossip and rumor and general yak-yak that spread faster than a prairie fire. The fact was that Danny and Johnny's forbidden romance had been the hottest topic of conversation for months in both Jefferson High on the American side, and Cataract High on the NAR side, where John was an alumnus. Most of Danny's former classmates, except for a few close friends like Sherry Applewhite, had thought she was crazy, or a traitor, or both. Danny found that the Northwest girls seemed to be romantics who thought it was super-cool that she had snagged the most handsome young man in the southern Border District sector, from a land-rich prominent local family with a proud revolutionary history, and a dashing blockade runner at that.

She also had to admit that she liked Cataract High school a lot better than she had ever liked Jefferson. She found that wearing a school uniform was an improvement; it removed differences between the poorer kids and the better-off ones and imparted a feeling of unity and belonging that adolescents needed. "That's another thing about the Labor Service," John told her. "Yeah, you get a lot of kids moaning and complaining about it, but it's something we all know from our childhood we're just going to have to do, and we all understand why it has to be done. One thing we can all be sure about: *everybody* has to do it. There is no class system in this country, and national service is one way we make sure it stays that way. No rich kids slithering out of it; everybody has to get his or her hands dirty for a year or two. As long as it's fair and nobody cheats the system, it's okay. Just think of it as having a guaranteed job when you get out of high school. Plus you may find you like it. It's not just ditch-digging and garbage-hauling and apple-picking, you can get all kinds of training in engineering, plumbing and electrical work, and science jobs and hotel management, and the NLS even has a cordon bleu cooking academy for training chefs. They'll get you into technical college or university courses. Some kids go into the Labor Service at seventeen, they find something they're good at, and after the army they go right back in and stick with it all their lives."

"I don't know really what I want to be yet," confessed Danny. "I just always figured I'd stay on the ranch and help Mom and Dad. I thought about being a vet."

"UM's got a School of Veterinary Medicine," John told her. "Right down the road, in Missoula. Once you do your Labor Service, you can do a year in pre-vet or some kind of science-related course like that, not sure exactly how it works, but the idea is to see if you've got the chops for it. Then you have to pass an entrance exam, and if you pass it you're in. I think it's three years to get your Doctor of Doggies or whatever."

"D.V.M. Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. That's what they call it back home, I mean over on the other side."

"Here too, I think," said Johnny. "Plus, when you complete your national service you'll be a third-class citizen, with one vote. If you did want to do a voluntary two years in the NDF afterward, that will put you about half-way to second-class, with two votes. I'm shooting for second-class now myself, but as a civilian I have to wait until I'm twenty-five, unless I do something really great like saving the President's life or getting qualified as a space pilot, something like that. It takes most people until about age forty-five or so to get their first-class ticket, with three votes."

"I thought I could get second and first class by having lots of babies?" said Danny mischievously.

"Yeah, you can," agreed John. "Second-class anyway, on the birth of the third child. You get your third-class when you complete your national service, because you've earned it by showing responsibility and giving something to the Republic, so the Republic gives you something back, that one basic vote. After that it makes sense to give older people with more life experience more say in the government of the country, as well as certain people like mothers who have a real stake in what happens in society. Not like you guys, giving any ape with two arms and two legs and a nappy head the same vote you give a surgeon or a physicist." He grinned at her. "Of course, if you really want to go for an early first, you could always apply to join the Party."

"Oh, God, my grandfather would drop dead of an apoplectic seizure!" said Danny, making a face. "And my father and mother would

drop right beside him. I'm not really interested in politics, though. Politics is what got us into all this mess to begin with, and don't worry, I know better than to say anything like that at the dinner table with your grandfather around!"

"Mmmm, yeah, maybe springing a thought like that on him off the cuff isn't such a hot idea," agreed Johnny with a nod. "But you know, Danny, maybe it wouldn't be such a bad thing if you were to try and get Pop off alone and sit down with him and talk to him. Yeah, he can be cantankerous and opinionated and a pain in the keester, I guess like most old people are, but he's earned the right. He's a bona fide, dyed-in-the-wool revolutionary hero, and he's one of the reasons you and I are even here at all."

Johnny went on. "You know, after independence Pop could have been one of the big shots if he'd wanted to. He knew them all back then, all the big names, Red Morehouse and Corby Morgan and Winston Wayne, just about anybody who ever was somebody in the Party or the NVA. He met the Old Man himself a few times, and he even knew Melanie Young when she was still in Montana—bet you didn't know she was born just down the road here in Walkerville? That was before she had to go on the bounce, and ended up with Tom Murdock out on the coast. After Longview, the new government practically begged all the old hands to stay on and take on major political and administrative roles, but some like Pop weren't having any. They'd done what they had to do, and now they were going back to pick up what was left of their lives and get on with living, and Pop was one of those. He came back to this place, and the only thing he ever asked of the Republic in return for his service was the return of the deed to this ranch that the Jew bank had foreclosed on. Which he got, and then he got on with life, with one major interruption for the Seven Weeks War. Look, Danny, you've already started taking History and Moral Philosophy class at Cataract . . ."

"Yeah, that's the one I have to pass," she said.

"Yup. No grades, only a pass or fail. That doesn't mean you have to agree with anything Mr. Nixon says. You can argue with him all you want. Hell, he *likes* kids to argue with him!"

"I've already noticed," said Danny dryly.

"But before you graduate, your H&MP teacher has to certify to the school and the state that you have at least some basic understanding of how our country came to be, and why, and how things are in the world. You don't have to agree with any of it, but you have to *know* it, basically so if you screw up you don't have any excuse. What I'm saying, though, is if you want to do more than just pass the course, Danny, if you really want to understand, then you couldn't find anyone better to tell you how things really were than Pop."

"Johnny, a month or so ago my grandfather drove me all over the American part of Jefferson County, showing me all these places where really bad stuff happened during the Trouble—sorry, I mean the War of Independence," Danny corrected herself. "Murders and bombings and ambushes, and some of them were really bad. At least he made it sound that way, and he says your grandfather was responsible for some of it."

"He was probably responsible for *most* of it," said Johnny with a chuckle. "And he won't deny it. Why don't you ask him about it?"

So Danny did. She found old man Selkirk in his private den in the ranch house after supper, sitting in his armchair reading *The Way We Live Now* by the 19th-century novelist Anthony Trollope. "People really read a lot of books over here," she began tentatively. "Not like at home, I mean over on my side of the Road. I mean, I know this is my side of the Road now . . ."

Selkirk chuckled. "I know what you mean, Danielle. Our television signs off around midnight, with the national anthem, and we've only got four channels anyway. One channel for news and politics and current affairs, one entertainment channel, one educational channel, and one privately owned channel so we can let people breathe and experiment and sometimes let off steam a bit. Any more than that gets unhealthy, and the tube starts replacing reality in people's minds. Like a lot of things, TV can serve a useful purpose, but only in moderation. Our people should always have something better to do than stare into a stupid electronic screen." He held up the book. "Bet you didn't know that most of the major literary figures of the Nineteenth and a good bit of the Twentieth centuries were anti-Jewish? This is a good example. The villain of the piece is a Jew swindler named Melmotte, who's one of the slimiest hebes in all literature."

"I never even heard of Trollop," said Danny, shaking her head.

"That's Troll-*ope*, and no, I suppose you haven't," said old Selkirk, shaking his head with a sigh. "What America has done to generations of young white people is criminal and unforgivable. You have no idea where you've been or where you come from, so how the hell can anyone expect you to know where you should be going?"

"My grandpa told me where I come from," said Danny. "He told me what happened back then, when he was a deputy and you were a spucky . . ." She had blurted the word out through careless habit, and she slapped her hand over her mouth in sudden fear. "Oh, no, I didn't mean to say . . ."

"I've heard the word, Danielle," the old man said with a chuckle. "Never was quite sure what it meant. I think some Jew disc jockey in Seattle made it up. They also used to call us goots, which I think is a corruption of the word *gook* from Vietnam days, but I'm not sure who came up with that one, either. Usually it was just terrorist. Or racist terrorist, or racist murderers, or Nazi psychopaths, or murdering racist fascist Nazi terrorist psychopaths, or some other combination of any of those. They never really had much imagination when it came to us. I guess we freaked them out too much. On the other hand, did you know the English language has over a hundred different terms for 'nigger'?"

"Uh, no sir, I didn't know that," said Danielle. "Mr. Selkirk, my grandfather told me a lot about you down through the years, none of it good. A few weeks ago when he found out I was seeing Johnny, he took me on a kind of ghoul's guided tour of places over on our side of the Road where all kinds of horrible things happened back during the Trouble, and your name got mentioned a lot. Johnny said I should ask you about it."

"So ask," invited Selkirk.

"Why did . . . I guess I just want to know why it had to be so bad, so bloody and violent and terrible?" said Danny, picking her words very carefully. She was intelligent enough to understand that her own grandfather's view of Ray Selkirk was bound to be heavily slanted due to four decades of walking around with a bad leg, but she also knew that the elderly man sitting in front of her had been considered a monster in

his own time, and she needed to understand how far she could go with him before he took something she said or did wrong and grew fangs.

"Because ZOG wouldn't have it any other way," Selkirk told her. "Because for almost a century before the Trouble, as you call it, the white people of America had done everything they could do to try and get these motherf—sorry, ma'am, I apologize, my language is from another age and I know it's not appropriate for this one—because we did everything we could do just to get these people to *stop*.

"Normal white people never minded if Jews wanted to go to church on Saturday, or niggers wanted to jive around in juke joints and snort cocaine and cut each other up on Saturday night, or silly college kids wanted to hang posters of Che Guevara and pretend they were commies without having the slightest clue as to what a Communist was, or rich men wanted to keep getting richer, or even if a few perverts wanted to sneak off into closets and do filthy things with one another. All of this stuff went on before, but it never oozed out into the sunlight and the normal world, where normal people lived and worked and went to church and got married and raised families from birth to death. The weirdness and the filth and the madness and the evil was always offstage, in dark corners or way high up in society out of sight. But then the madness and the badness started to flow under the locked doors and down out of the tower rooms, and it started getting into everything and poisoning everyone's lives. Federal Reserve in 1913, a completely pointless war between brothers in Europe in 1914, the election of a syphilitic and a dyke to the White House in 1933 . . ."

"What's a dyke?" asked Danny. "That's some kind of dam the Dutch use to keep back the sea, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it's a damn something, all right," muttered Selkirk. "Never mind, girl, that part of your education *definitely* ain't my responsibility. What I'm trying to say, Danielle, is that like an apple with just a little spot of decay on it, eventually the whole fruit rotted, and the rot spread. The good people of America were too busy living. They were enjoying life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, like they used to say, so the Jews and the bad white people took over and decided that *everybody had to be like them*, to think like them, to live like them. They spent a good hundred years trying to force it on the rest of us. All down through those

decades we begged and pleaded for them to stop, and they wouldn't. They blocked off democracy and the law, took over the government and the courts, and made everything dependent on huge amounts of money that normal people could never raise, so normal people had no power any more. We complained, we protested, we petitioned for redress of grievances, we called idiot talk show hosts on the radio and we bitched and moaned, every now and then we got together and waved a few signs in the streets, and we voted for some ass—pardon me again, ma'am, we voted for some fools called Republicans who forgot us and betrayed us as soon as they plunked their keesters down in their seats after the election. And they added insult to injury. The Jews and liberals controlled all the media, so every television show and movie mocked us and belittled us and spat on everything we cherished."

"They still do, sir," said Danny. "I'm a Christian, remember?"

"Yeah, so you know. But believe me, Danny, it was a lot worse back then. Worse than you can imagine. They didn't just hate normal people's religion, they hated our beautiful skin and hair and eyes and our magnificent minds and our mighty souls, for they themselves had none of those things, and it drove them mad with hate. It became pretty clear that they didn't just want to lord it over us, they wanted us all dead. All white people who didn't bow down and kiss their assorted body parts, and even those who did were only buying themselves a little time. I know you probably think I'm just regurgitating Party propaganda, child, but no kidding. They really wanted to kill us all. No more white people, anywhere, ever. And for generation after generation, all we would do was weep, and wail, and gnash our teeth, and wring our hands, and beg and plead with them to stop. That was all we ever wanted. We just wanted them to *stop!*"

"So what happened then?" asked Danny.

"We *made* them stop," said Ray simply. "You know how. Your grandfather told you how, and I imagine he told it pretty much right."

"Did you really have to murder all those Mexican people that one time, to make the bad people stop doing what they were doing?" asked Danny quietly.

"Yes ma'am, I did," said the old man. "I suppose I could try to explain it to you, but I doubt you'd get it, because you weren't there. You've never had to live like that, a stranger and a victim in your own land where people with dark skins hunt you as prey, so you'd damned well better hunt them back, better and meaner. You could never understand, and that's a very good thing. You shouldn't have to deal with horror like that. We did it so you would never have to. Danny, there are some things in life that just have to be done. You don't go all broody and introspective like Hamlet and dither about it. You just get on with it, you do what has to be done, and you don't spend the rest of your life repenting, or justifying, or agonizing over it. The continued life of this wonderful and beautiful race of ours is the ultimate justification for everything, because politically correct horse dung aside, the fact is that we are the world. Really. Shakespeare once wrote all the world's a stage, or I suppose in these times it might be said that all the world's a movie. If it is, then white people have all the speaking parts. The other races are just extras for the crowd scenes."

"My grandfather said it wasn't necessary," Danny persisted with quiet stubbornness. "Grandpa said we should have chosen to die rather than be cruel to the dark people to survive, because we're supposed to be better than that."

"I'm sure he did, and the horrifying thing was that even in the face of extinction, there were white people who truly felt like that. Still are, I imagine, even to this day, in spite of everything America has become. The Jews have done a slap-up job of destroying our minds and making us hate ourselves, I'll give 'em that. There are white people in what's left of the United States today—very wealthy white people, of course—who genuinely believe that our race deserves to perish from the earth for the crime of making this planet a place of civilization and man's creation. White people who actively work for the destruction of this country because we will not think and believe like them, and be like them, and accept their moral superiority and obey them. That's the true essence of liberalism, white people doing what they're told. Goodthink, as Orwell called it. You know who George Orwell was, Danny?"

"Uh, no sir, I'm sorry, I don't," Danny admitted.

"That's a pity, because you're really missing something. George Orwell was a Communist who lived long enough to learn wisdom, and his last two novels redeemed his life of error. I'll lend you those books, and I think they'll help you understand," said Ray. He shook his head. "You know, I swear, white people are the only race that is even capable of formulating such a thought, that we deserve to die. You ever notice that? We're the only race on earth that possesses a conscience. We are the only people in human history capable of feeling guilt and shame. You're a Christian, you say. You know the story of the Garden of Eden and the serpent who persuaded Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit?"

"Uh, have you read the Bible, sir?" asked Danny in some surprise.

"Sure," chuckled the old man. "Haven't you ever heard that the devil can quote Scripture? You know one interpretation of that chapter is that the forbidden fruit was actually the knowledge of sin. Adam and Eve took a chomp and then all of a sudden they realized they were naked and started grabbing for the nearest fig leaf. The white race is the only human species that is capable of understanding the concept of sin, of offending God and incurring his wrath. Niggers have no sense of sin. They only fear the whip, and when you take away the whip you get—well, look at what's left of Chicago and Minneapolis today, and see what you get. Asians are more advanced. They have a deep sense of honor and sometimes ethics, but that's not the same as a conscience. Only white people have that. I'm sorry, miss, I'm rambling, like old men do. Where were we?"

"You said you had to use all that terrible violence to make the bad people stop doing what they were doing," Danny reminded him.

"Oh, yes," said Ray. "Well, we did."

"Reverend Billy Bob Pritchard, he's the head of our church, and he delivers a digital sermon every Sunday from our home church in Texarkana, he says violence never settles anything."

Old Ray sighed. "Look, Danielle, let's bring this closer to home. I know that whatever you think of me, which probably isn't much, you care for my grandson, and regardless of the skeletons in your family closet I'm glad to see that. John is right at that age where he needs a good woman and responsibility to steady him down. I have reservations about your religion due to some things that happened in my own past, but that

was many years ago, and I get that Christianity in an all-white society is a lot different from what it became under political correctness, when it morphed into a monster like a werewolf under a full moon. From what I've seen so far, I think you two would be good for each other. But what do you think would have happened if we hadn't used force a few weeks ago to get him back from those snakes who were planning to do him harm? Where would he be now, and what would he be suffering? Where would you be, and what would you be feeling? I'm sorry, ma'am but this idea that violence never settles anything is simply not true. It has settled the fate of people and nations quite effectively and finally, ever since history began. Do you know that all of us, both my family and yours, exist only because of a single act of violence?"

"Something from the War of Independence?" asked Danny, getting the name right this time.

"No. I believe you've mentioned that one of your teachers at Cataract High School is a lady named Mrs. Allura Campbell, correct?"

"Yes, sir," said Danny. "The Campbells have had me and John over for dinner at their house."

"Of course, I knew that," muttered Ray irritably. "My mind must be starting to wander. You know who Mrs. Campbell is, or rather who her mother was?"

"Yes, sir," answered Danny. "Georgia Myers, who killed President Hunter Wallace. That's why they call Allura the Daughter of the Nation. The whole country kind of adopted her after Lieutenant Campbell's father and Elizabeth Parris smuggled her back to Montana in the last weeks of the war. It's famous. Mrs. Campbell is the only history teacher I know of who has a section about herself in the textbook."

"It's Elizabeth Cardinale now," remarked Ray. "I knew that goombah husband of hers Vince back in the day, when he was a Volunteer. Maybe you'll get to meet her if they ever come out here for an Old Fighters' reunion. Anyway, do you have any idea the effect that nuclear explosions in Missoula and Butte and Kalispell would have had on this part of Montana, Danny? I and my children who were born at the time would all be dead, but so would your own grandfather and your parents, and you and your brother would never have existed. This entire part of the world would be nothing but a radioactive wasteland that could

be seen at night from satellites as a big glowing patch of sickness and emptiness. God knows how many people of all races would have died in this country, in the U.S. and Canada, even in Aztlan and Mexico, all because one gibbering madman hated us so badly that in his madness he would slaughter millions rather than allow an all-white nation to exist. That is how badly some of these people hate us, Danielle, and this one had the power to act on his hate. A brave woman stopped him, by stabbing him through the eye with a pencil and then surrendering her own life as the price of that deed. Two lives for how many untold millions saved and how many millions who would never have been born except for an act of violence. Your preacher is wrong, Danielle. Violence most certainly *does* settle things. A lot of things."

"My grandfather would agree with you," said Danny with a sigh. "He just thinks they got settled wrong."

"I know," said Ray with a chuckle.

Danny was looking at a framed portrait of a young woman standing on the mantelpiece of the fireplace. She was a pretty girl dressed in a leather mini-skirt and spiky haired, with body-piercings and jewel studs, a style fifty years out of date no woman in the Republic and few in the States would be seen dead in these days. Ray noticed her looking at it. "That's my sister, Carol. It was taken before the war, when she was about your age."

"Why does she look like that?"

"Just a child being silly. Even out here in Montana, white kids lived in a television and computer world that came from the degenerate cities. Niggers were supposed to be cool, so white kids tried to dress and act like them. Carol's whigger phase was short, thank God, but she liked that photo because it bugged the hell out of Mom and Dad," Ray went on with a laugh. "I keep that one in here because she liked it so much. Reminds me of a time I can't really remember any more, before all the sh—all the trouble started. We have a better picture of her on the wall in the living room, taken later, without the nose ornaments and the hair spikes."

"Yes, sir, I've seen it," said Danny. "I think she looks sad in that one."

"She was," Ray told her. "It had started by then."

"Mr. Selkirk," said Danny slowly, not knowing whether she dared broach the topic at all, "John told me what my grandfather did to Carol and her children. How he sent them off to that place in Nevada and they died there. I didn't know. That's one thing he never told us about, ever. I am truly sorry."

"What for?" asked Ray. "You didn't do it. You weren't even born then."

"But why?" asked Danny, shaking her head. "I don't understand how he could do something like that."

"The same way I could put bullets into the heads of all those beaners, Danielle," the old man told her. "Because it was his duty."

* * *

Just after sunset on the night of September 29th, two long black shapes whirred softly across old Interstate 15, over the half-ruined town of Jefferson City on the American side. The aircraft were British-made Puma-12 attack helicopters, that is to say they were made in Sheffield from Chinese-manufactured parts and assembled by a mud-colored workforce, supervised by members of the United Kingdom's ever-shrinking white technological and engineering élite. They were part gunship, armed with air-to-ground missiles and revolving-barrel weapons, but with passenger room for up to a six-man assault force as well as pilot and co-pilot.

Tonight there were only eight commandos in camouflage, four men on each helicopter. Those who weren't that color already had their faces blacked. One team was commanded by Colonel Malcolm Hart, and the second by Captain Trevor Jones. Jones was a "black Brit," i.e. a mulatto who was brave enough, and capable of following fairly complex orders, but who had never managed to lose his quasi-Cockney accent and replace it with proper spiffy BBC Oxonian. (London was now one of the largest non-white cities in the world.) The copters' engines were in whisper mode, using the latest variation on Blue Pulse technology developed at the beginning of the century, that quieted if not totally silenced engine noise by using triple flap modules in the trailing edge of each rotor blade in order to muffle the blade-vortex interaction,

essentially the rotor slapping and sucking on air, that emitted the well-known "whuppa-whuppa" sound. The machines could be heard from the ground, but not from very far off, and they were flying so low and fast that any casual observer couldn't be sure what he had seen. Most likely not, anyway. The New Model Army men were still somewhat jumpy; it had been a long time since any American had bearded the Northwest lion in his den.

Jones spoke into his communications headset. "Sure we can't just drop a couple of missiles on this gaff, air it out with the chain guns, and then bugger off home, sir?" he asked.

"No, that would make this little excursion of ours look too much like an act of war, Captain," replied Hart from the other copter. "It's not war, it's just a bit of rough-housing, a friendly little social call to return a favor. A dead lady for a dead lady, to be sure, but also hopefully the beginning of another long round of that jolly old game of tit-for-tat. These barbarian cowboys won't be able to let the loss of this particular damsel rest, and things should get sufficiently hot that this Community Prosperity Zone business will either get put on the back burner, or better yet, if they go ahead with it, it will require all manner of New Model Army presence to protect America's remaining honey bees from their unpleasant neighbors. We'll need blockhouses, Bremer walls, minefields, razor wire embankments, motion sensors, high-tech communications, and above all many, many troops deployed along the border. That will mean weapons, munitions, supplies, rations, accommodation for the troops, and that in turn means copious defense budget, of the kind America hasn't been able to scrape up in a generation. Always remember, Captain: in a democracy it's all about the money. Who controls it, who decides who gets how much of it. Among the other industries which will be revived by the Community Prosperity doctrine will be traditional defense contracting, which has been languishing in the doldrums for quite a while. A long, low-level border war will also put paid to all this Constructive Engagement bollocks, and possibly get a certain neglected government department elevated back up to full Cabinet status where it belongs."

"I presume you're not just speaking off the cuff, Colonel?" asked Captain Jones over the commo.

"Oh, no, Captain," replied Hart, "I crave retribution for the murder of my dusky dulcinea, right enough, but I made sure to clear this op with higher-ups. The conversation I had by secure uplink with ONR Director Goldblum was most instructive. I never liked this barmy idea of sheltering America's remaining productive people and plant under the guns of our worst enemies. Very bad form and asking for trouble. It's also insulting to the New Model Army. I mean, what the devil do they pay *us* for, anyway?"

"We're glorified bloody turnkeys is what we is, sir," said Jones. "Prison guards keeping their cities locked up. No job for a soldier, that."

"Precisely, Captain. Soldiers need a proper war with proper opponents. Consider our little expedition this evening as contributing to our job security. Hence certain parties' willingness to let us have use of the air transport, otherwise we'd be hoofing it tonight."

"ETA to Pole Mountain Road AZ ten minutes, Colonel," spoke up the pilot in the cockpit. "It could be cut to four minutes if you'd just let us . . ."

"No, you need to circle round and make your approach from the west," said Hart. "Stay low as you can and scare the piss out of the prairie dogs. Our intelligence on their air defenses is by no means what it should be. I want to make absolutely certain there are no nasty surprises waiting for us."

Lieutenant Bobby Campbell the Third was staying late at the Civil Guard station with his father and uncle, helping Major Tom Horakova get set up in his new office, or rather the office he would use when he was in Basin to check up on events Across the Road. Ironically, it was the same utility closet into which Bobby had thrown the battered Gabi Martine a month ago. Bobby had cleaned it out, removed the shelving units, and moved in a desk and several filing cabinets. Tom Horakova and Corporal Sweeney were now fiddling around with the in-house telephone and computer connections. "I assume your laptop is worldnet-accessible, Uncle Tom?" asked Bobby with some envy.

"Yes, sometimes it has to be, when there's something on somebody's computer I need to see," said Horakova. "It took me years before I could get even *that* level of clearance. I can view foreign websites and read

them, and take notes which I then have to type up and submit in hard copy reports, but I can't download anything off the worldnet."

"Mmm, surely by now we've worked our own IT capabilities up to the point where we can ease up on some of the cyber-paranoia?" asked Bobby.

"Not being able to connect with the rest of the world has advantages other than security, Bobby," his father reminded him. "Do you really want your twelve-year-old son looking at videos of women performing sexual acts with animals and watching gyrating, screaming niggers?"

"No parent would allow anything like that!" exclaimed Bobby.

"It happened all the time before the revolution," Robert Campbell senior reminded him. "I'm old enough to remember that. The damned internet of the early part of the century was even sicker than it is now, and it destroyed millions of young white people in their minds before their bodies and souls followed. The Republic is determined that in this country society controls the internet, not vice versa. Freedom stops where white children begin."

Horakova spoke up. "Not being able to download is a pain in the butt, right enough, but the Republic has always vowed that Jewish bastards from anywhere in the world will *not* infect our communications systems or databases with any kind of virus, or Trojan, or spyware, or malware of any kind, never mind corrupt our children with the moral excrement that democracy wallows in. The only way to make sure that never happens is to restrict access to the worldnet, or at least restrict it to read-only, as in the case with me, so there is no actual transfer of data packets that might contain something they shouldn't.

"Sure, the various cyberwar and cyber-intel outfits in the government have full access, and they get hacked and infected and sometimes completely wiped out, whenever the Americans or the East Canadians or the Chinese can get past our firewalls and detectors. But those computers are never connected to any others, and so any virus whatever stops there. We have learned to live without the internet. None of our defense systems or our power grids or anything important are dependent on interconnected computers. We do everything we can the good old-fashioned way, through human beings who write stuff down on pieces of paper. Anything I learn about what our buddies

Over The Road are up to, I'll write up in my best secret policeman's bureaucratese and send it on to Olympia by mail or courier, or I'll make a phone call on a secure line, or if it's something really hot I'll go see whoever I need to see and tell them personally. Yeah, it's a lot slower way of doing things than a few keystrokes, but it balances out as a lot safer. One of the reasons neither the Russians nor the Americans could ever conquer Afghanistan was that the Taliban's command structure consisted of a few bearded geezers in turbans sitting on grass mats in a hut or a cave around a big brass pot of tea. And you know what? We've found over the years that it doesn't really matter how fast you can do something. What matters is whether it's worth doing at all."

Bobby had taken to carrying his Jefferson County hotline phone on his belt next to his personal phone, and now it bleeped at him. "Hmm," he said. "Wonder what Lomax wants? I'll put it on speaker." He pulled out the phone and opened it, "Yes, sheriff? What can I do for you?"

"You can get your ass out to your house, *now!*" came a voice.

"What?" exclaimed Bobby. "You're not Sheriff Lomax."

"No, Campbell, this is Brandon Blackwell. Remember me? I stole Lomax's special phone because I had to get hold of you."

"So what's this about my house?" asked Bobby.

"That son-of-a-bitch Hart called in some of his thugs, and they've got two military helicopters as well, so for all I know this may be officially sanctioned," said Blackwell rapidly. "They left about ten minutes ago. I hacked his laptop and so I know where you live, I think. I'm following them over the border in my ground car. Hope I can find your place in the dark."

"What the hell are you talking about?" snapped Bobby, a chill suddenly creeping into his blood.

"Hart was fucking that hapa FBI agent you guys shot, Mona James, and he's out for revenge," said Blackwell. "He's got eight or ten guys in the copters, and he's going to attack your house and kill Allura, probably your kids as well! *Move!"*

Bobby snapped the phone shut and looked at the others, aghast. "Tom, you've got your BOSS skycar?" asked Colonel Robert Campbell.

"Out front," said Horakova. "We can get there three minutes from liftoff."

"Sweeney, get Schmeissers and full ammo belts from the arms room!" ordered Bobby Three. "Move it!" He stepped into the lobby. "Boardman! Who's out on patrol?"

"Martinelli and Briggs, sir," the sergeant told him.

"Both of them in skycars?"

"Yes, sir," replied Boardman.

"Tell them to respond to a gun call at my house out on Pole Mountain Road. Approach with caution, there will be other Guardsmen and civilians in the area as well as armed hostiles, possibly as many as a dozen. Call the NDF command centers in Butte and Helena both, and tell them we have a penetration by two American helicopters carrying special ops personnel, target being my wife and family. If nothing else we can nail the swine when they try to cross back over to their side of the Road. Request an SS rapid response force." By then all four men were running for the door, Corporal Sweeney tossing them Northwest-made MP-40 submachine guns, two pounds lighter than the German originals due to carbon fiber folding stock and fittings, as well as web belts laden with magazine pouches. They leaped into Horakova's car, and as the vehicle whirred and chunked and lifted into the air, Bobby flipped his personal phone open. "Come on, Ally*, pick up!*" he hissed under his breath.

"Hi, Bobby," he heard his wife's voice say. "You guys on your way already? Dinner won't be for another hour."

"Yeah, honey, we're on our way, but not for dinner," her husband told her. "Ally, listen to me. I'm not joking, and you have to do what I say. We have some unwelcome visitors on their way, hired killers from Across The Road. They're retaliating for that time we visited them a few weeks ago, and they're coming to kill you and the kids as punishment for one of the nigger bitches."

There was a moment of silence on the other end. "All right. What do you want me to do?" she asked calmly. There was no panic, no unnecessary questions, no hysterics like an American woman would have immediately lapsed into. Northwesters grew up knowing that they lived in a world full of enemies, and an attack could come at any time, from any quarter.

"My first instinct is to tell you to get out of the house, but American military copters will have infrared detection equipment, and these guys

will have night-sights on their weapons," said Bobby. "They'll spot the ground car leaving and hit you on the road, or if you try to get out into the woods behind the house they'll hunt you down like rabbits from the air. Take my X-4 and your own gun from the cabinet, grab the gas masks, and get Clancy and the girls into our bedroom. Barricade the windows and door with our mattress and mattresses from the kids' rooms. Lie on the floor and keep this phone call open so we can communicate. Don't open the door unless you know it's us."

"Bobby, Clancy's not here," said Ally, for the first time a twinge of fear in her voice. "He's out hunting."

"Damn!" cursed Bobby. "He's twelve, so let's hope he wandered farther than we gave him permission to, and he's down by the creek or up on Pole Mountain. Get the girls and get them into the bedroom now, honey. Tell me when you're locked down."

Tom Horakova spoke up, "Bobby, I know you don't want to hear this, but American military copters may also have deep penetration thermal scanners, and they may be able to tell how many people are in the house and where they are, from the heat signatures. Suppose they target the house with a missile?"

"Then I've just killed my wife and daughters," said Bobby bleakly. "But Blackwell said this was personal with that limey son-of-a-bitch Hart. Apparently he's a race-traitor in more ways than one, and he wants revenge because he was engaging in bestiality with that female wog from the FBI. If that's the case, he'll want to get in close and pull the trigger himself."

"What was that about Clancy?" asked Bob senior.

"He's out potting at wildlife with that twenty-two I gave him for his birthday," said Bobby. "He's away from the house." He called his two mobile Guards on his handset. "Steve, Tasha, what's your ETA at my place?"

"About ten minutes, boss," came Guardsman Martinelli's voice. "I'm coming from Rimini."

"Me too, Lieutenant," came Natasha Briggs' voice. "I just passed over Wickesville." Unlike helicopters, levitational autos could only hover over specially-engineered roads or highways with the required circuitry, so they couldn't approach an area as the crow flew.

"Okay, we're facing NMA military choppers. Make sure your radar is on, and if you get a hostile blip you ground immediately and get the hell away from the car," Bobby ordered them. "You're not armored, and a chain gun will blow a skycar to shreds."

"Bobby!" said Allura's voice in his earphone, low and urgent. "We're in the bedroom now with the mattresses up. The girls are under the bed. I hear something outside. It's not loud, but it sounds like a helicopter."

"They're coming in using whisper mode, and they've beaten us to the house!" Bobby told the others in despair.

* * *

It had become customary in the Northwest American Republic for fathers to give sons their first personal firearm at age thirteen; Bobby believed his son to be sufficiently mature and well-trained both by himself and at school to receive a weapon at twelve. It was a .22-caliber Cascade Arms Plainsman (frankly, a Ruger knockoff) chambered for 5.6 X 35mm centerfire Hornet rounds with a hefty (for a .22) 40-grain bullet. It also came equipped with an infrared night scope. His father had given him permission to go out into the surrounding countryside with it on his own, with the proviso that he never went more than a couple of miles from home, and that he only shot at smaller animals. "Rabbits, prairie dogs, squirrels, and coyotes only," Bobby had warned him. "Nothing bigger, son. You don't want to bite off more than you can chew. Do *not* try to bring down a buffalo, or a bear, or a mountain lion with a .22. You can dangerously wound a cat with this, and a bear or a buffalo you'll just piss off and get torn to pieces or stomped flat. No shooting at thylacines, either, if you see any. We've just brought them back from extinction. Unthinking and uncaring men wiped them out once before back in Tasmania. We've corrected that, but there's still too few of them to be sure they're back for good, so leave them alone."

Tonight Clancy was out on Pole Mountain hunting, or rather he was wandering around in the dark pretending to hunt, fantasizing about being characters from his favorite TV programs such as the great African mercenary *Captain Caprivi*, or the Confederate guerrilla leader *Quantrill*,

or one of the legendary Zack Hatfield's Northwest Volunteers from the popular *Wild Bunch*, which was now in its fourth season. Clancy was aware that a lot of old guys who had known the actual Hatfield and really were with the Wild Bunch back then were complaining about the Northwest Broadcasting Agency's exaggerating and trivializing history, and the writers and producers of the show were in turn defending themselves on grounds of creative license, but Clancy didn't care. He liked the show, and he wished his mom and his grandfather the Colonel would let them make a movie about Operation Belladonna and his famous grandmother, but for some reason they wouldn't.

Clancy hadn't even fired at anything tonight, just enjoyed a ramble along his favorite mountain trail, where he had sat on a log for a while and watched the stars come out. He was getting hungry now, and heading for home, his breath frosting, guiding his way with a flashlight, when he paused on the path winding down to his house. The air was crisp and cold and the stars were like a sprinkling of dust on the moonless black sky, and as he looked it appeared for all the world like there were two giant bats hovering over his house, moving up and down slightly, blocking out the stars. The boy switched off his flashlight to see better, and he realized that they were helicopters. They weren't completely silent: Clancy could hear their engines faintly. He couldn't see their silhouettes clearly enough to identify them from retired Major Mallard's class in Military Science for the Pioneers, but he immediately understood that these aircraft had no business being where they were and doing what they were doing, and he knew there was only one place they could have come from. Clancy stuck the flashlight in his pocket and unslung his rifle, made sure there was a round in the chamber and the safety was off. Then he began a careful descent down toward the house, weapon at the ready.

Unknowingly, Colonel Malcolm Hart and his men were now facing one of the most formidable soldiers on the planet—a Northwest twelve-year-old.

"Sir, the thermoscan confirms heat signatures on three people in what appears to be a rear bedroom of the structure," the chopper pilot told Hart. "Looks like one adult, two juveniles."

"There should be four targets, five if the husband is home," replied Hart. "Oh, well, a bit of a lighter bag than I'd hoped for, but one makes do. On my mark, lads, down we go."

Clancy got to a large pine growing out of a hillock which was slightly above and behind the roof of the garage, and through his infrared night scope he saw that both of the NMA teams now quickly rappelling down lines from the helicopters. He leveled his weapon, aimed carefully, and fired just as one of the rappellers touched ground. The old Volunteer luck held, and his bullet found a nigger, Captain Trevor Jones, smashing the hyoid bone and puncturing the carotid artery in his neck. The black Brit oogled and gurgled and hit the ground, rolling and flopping. *"Sniper!"* yelled one of the mercenaries. A window in the house opened and Allura Campbell fired several shots at one of the helicopters from her husband's army-issue X-4 rifle, dinging the armor plate.

The skycar containing the four men from Basin swung around the mountain roughly forty feet in the air, which was hugging the highway, headed for the Campbell house. "We got copters!" said Horakova as his radar bleeped. "I'm going down!" He landed the skycar by the side of the road, and the four Northwest officers bailed out just in time to avoid a slashing hail of .50-caliber slugs from one the copters' chain guns that tore the car in half. They knelt and returned fire, the 9-millimeter rounds rattling harmlessly off the armored aircraft. "Sweeney! Move and fire at the copters, make as much noise as you can, see if you can distract at least one of them away from the house!" yelled Colonel Campbell. He tossed Sweeney several extra magazines. "Bobby, you and Tommy come with me." Several shots cracked out through the darkness along with several bursts of automatic fire. "Wait, who's firing out behind the house? That doesn't sound military, that sounds like something light."

"My God, it's Clancy!" yelled Bobby. The Americans' automatic weapons fire rattled in bursts. "They're shooting at my son!" The three of them ran forward while Sweeney directed several long bursts of fire from his MP-40 at the helicopter, changing position after each burst of fire, dodging .50-caliber slugs from the chain gun.

Clancy remembered his Pioneer training, and he also remembered many quasi-instructional episodes of *The Young Warriors*, a neat cartoon

show where the characters were child Volunteers during the War of Independence, or sometimes Pioneers or Hitler Youth caught behind enemy lines during the Seven Weeks War. The show was not just after-school entertainment, but had been produced by Asgard Studios in conjunction with the NDF. Kids of both genders helped out the grownups by becoming junior guerrillas, thus precipitating many dramatic adventures. Each episode concentrated on some aspect of partisan warfare against a powerful American or Canadian enemy, everything from improvised explosives and how to place and use them, to codes and code-breaking, to sniper tactics.

There were several episodes on sniper tactics, in fact, so Clancy changed his position after every shot and moved fast. He knew the enemy would have night-vision gear just like he did, but it was largely restricted to line of light, so he tried to keep as much actual earth as he could between himself and his targets, who were now surrounding his house. Five of them were, at any rate. Two of them had detached from the landing zone in Clancy's front yard and were now working their away around him from both the north and the south, trying to spot flank him, spot him in their infrareds, and kill him. Clancy knew he had to turn the flanking move on one or the other of the hostiles who were after him, get around one of them and put him between himself and the second enemy, and then he should break contact and try to escape and evade, but he couldn't E&E with his mother and sisters still inside the house.

"Can you get hold of him by phone?" whispered Colonel Robert Campbell as he and his son as well as Tom Horakova crouched in a culvert just across the road from the house.

"Voice mail!" said Bobby despairingly. "He either forgot his phone or he has it turned off!"

A spotlight from one of the choppers swept over them. "They've seen us," said Tom. "We need to move." The trio charged across the road, firing their submachine guns, desperate to get close enough to the black-clad infiltrators so the helicopters wouldn't fire their chain guns, for fear of hitting down into their own men. Sweeney was still firing ineffectually at the armored copters from behind cover about fifty yards away. Clancy Campbell was still zipping Hornet slugs into the

yard, although he hadn't scored another hit yet, but since he was now almost three hundred yards back up the hillside and moving, dodging the two Americans who were stalking him, that was explicable. Allura was firing from the window at the black shadows of her attackers.

"Getting a bit hot, eh what?" said Hart to his next-in-command, an American staff sergeant named Withers. "Right, in we go." He slapped a charge of plastic explosive onto the side door of the house, hit a button on the timer. "Three, two, one . . ." The charge blew and splintered the door open. "Right, Merrick and Carlson, bag that sniper! Farouq and Jolson, make the new lot keep their heads down. Withers and Lumumba with me, we take out the targets and . . ."

Up on the ridge in front of Pole Mountain there was a pop and a flash and then a whistling streak of light. A shoulder-fired surface-to-air missile zipped overhead and slammed into the first helicopter, exploding and knocking it end over end in the air, slamming it into the ground almost a hundred and fifty yards down Pole Mountain Road, where it burned. The second pilot, with typical American gallantry, abandoned his ground team, soared upward and banked to the east. A second, almost casual missile exploded the copter in mid-air.

"Who the hell is that?" asked Bobby, from where he and the others lay prone behind several natural granite boulders that adorned the northeast corner of his wide front lawn.

"Those were Greenbats! The NDF must have had some kind of warning before we did," said Robert Campbell the elder. "They couldn't have gotten here that fast from the time your man called them from the station!"

Simultaneously a number of gunshots came popping from up on the hill behind the Campbell home, muzzle flashes flickering in the dark, and the Americans covering behind the corners of the home opened fire on the Northwest three behind the low boulders. For the next minute the action became indescribable, but as nearly as Bobby Three could ever reconstruct it:

* One of the Americans flipped a hand grenade through the shattered window Allura was using for a firing port, and Allura batted it back like a badminton bird. The two Americans on

the north side of the house either didn't notice it or couldn't get hold of it in time to toss it away, due to being pinned down by Schmeisser fire from her husband and relatives, and the grenade detonated, killing both attackers.

* Sergeant Withers and Corporal Mawengi Lumumba, who were preparing to follow Colonel Hart into the house, were shot and killed by marksmen on the low hill behind the garage, using armor-piercing bullets that cut through their flak jackets. This hillside seemed to have suddenly become populated with at least a dozen active shooters. At some point around this time, NMA Warrant Officer Merrick and Specialist Carlson were also shot and killed up on the ridge by these unknown forces.
* Colonel Malcolm Hart entered the house and approached the bedroom door behind which Allura and the girls were barricaded, firing several bursts from his own submachine gun into the door. He pulled a second plastic explosive charge from his pouch, ready to slap it onto the door.
* Someone on the ridge fired a flare into the air, and then a second flare, illuminating the scene in a weird reddish light.
* A large black ground sedan with American Montana state government license plates roared down the road from the north, turned at speed into Bobby's driveway, and couldn't stop in time, slamming into the garage door. A man jumped out and ran into the house, ignoring the hail of bullets all around him.
* There was some confused shouting inside, then two struggling figures suddenly emerged from the bomb-shattered side door. One was the enraged Malcolm Hart, who was wrestling, kicking, and punching at the man who had arrived in the car, twisting for control of his weapon, which went off in several bursts as the two men grappled and rolled down the driveway. Hart broke free, then suddenly realized that he had lost his team, lost his air transport, and he was surrounded by irate Northmen with guns. He started to sprint across Pole Mountain Road. He didn't make it twenty feet before he was cut down by a combination of rifles from the hillside and submachine gun fire from the Guardsmen and Major Horakova. The autopsy

> later revealed over 50 bullets in Hart's body armor, and twelve more in his legs, arms, head and neck. These included one .22 Hornet slug.

Bobby ran up to where the second man lay in his driveway just as the flare died in the sky. He pulled out a flashlight. He recognized the American from the brief glimpse he'd gotten when he'd kicked Gabi Martine's black ass back over the Road. "Blackwell! Are you all right?"

"The limey son-of-a-bitch shot me," Blackwell replied, gasping. "Never mind me! Hart put a bomb on one of the doors in there! I think Allura and the children are in that room!"

Bobby ran inside. "Ally! Are you and the girls okay?" he shouted.

"Bobby?" cried his wife from inside. "Yes, we're all right! What's going on out there?"

"Ally, there's an explosive charge on the door! Doesn't look like the bastard was able to set the timer, but can you and the kids get out the window? Tom and my father are out there."

"No, I'm here," said his father behind him. "Crap! Is that thing live?"

"Dad, go around to the bedroom window and get Ally and the kids out that way," said Bob. "I'll try to get it off the door and out of the house."

"The hell you will!" said Robert senior. "You'll wait for the bomb squad! Allura, can you hear me? We're coming around to the window. Don't try to get out until we make sure there are no more hostiles out there." They both turned and ran back down the hall and out the door. Within two minutes Allura and both girls had climbed out the window. Cathy was pale but silent. Morag had been crying but now she took her thumb out of her mouth and said, "Bad men!"

"Yes, honey, bad men," replied Tom Horakova. He took her from Cathy. "Very bad men. You know, I remember a night long ago when I was little, and I saw some bad men too. The same ones, unfortunately. They blew up our van that we drove from Chicago so we could Come Home."

They moved around the house to the driveway. They saw Corporal Mike Sweeney by the garage talking to a group of armed men in civilian clothes, among them young Clancy Campbell and the two Civil Guards who had been called in from patrol. "No chivalry tonight, so you weren't able to keep me out of this one, sir!" said Tash Briggs sardonically.

"Who are these people?" asked Colonel Campbell.

"Two of my people, and the rest are the Selkirks," said Bobby, nodding in greeting. "Ray. John. Hatcher. Cullen. Much obliged."

"Figured we owed you one," said old Ray, lighting a cheroot. "And we damn sure owe this lady one. We brought everybody we could jam into our two skytrucks. Grounded up on Basin Creek Road and came in on foot from the back. You got a couple more dead dogs up there in the woods you'll want to scrape up come daylight. You must be Colonel Robert Campbell. Your boy favors you."

"He does," said Bob senior. "Always pleased to meet an Old Fighter, Comrade Selkirk. Where on earth did you get Greenbat missiles?"

"I like to keep a well-stocked armory," said Ray. "Gotta love that First Amendment to our Republic's Constitution."

"Clancy, are you all right?" asked Bobby.

"I'm fine, Dad," said Clancy excitedly. "I got a couple of hits!"

"I don't understand. How did you guys know what was happening and where to come?" asked Bobby Three.

"That Brandon Blackwell feller called us after he called you," said Selkirk, nodding down to the man lying bleeding on the concrete driveway. "He said he wasn't sure the NDF could get here in time."

"Who's that with him?" asked Horakova.

"That's Danny," said Johnny Selkirk. "She's put a tourniquet on his leg and she's holding pressure on the wound. He ain't hit too bad. Looks like he'll mend."

"She came along?" asked Bobby in some surprise.

"Yeah, she's gone native," said John. "She's one of us now."

* * *

Several days later Colonel Robert Campbell Junior and Lieutenant Robert Campbell the Third visited Brandon Blackwell in the Teaching Hospital in Missoula, where he had been medevaced by helicopter from Basin. "I was pretty lucky," Blackwell told them, standing by his bed, packing a few items into a suitcase Bobby had provided, a cane leaning on the bed beside him. "If that bullet had hit my femoral artery I'd be gone now. As it is, without that girl who applied the tourniquet and stopped the bleeding, I'd also be done for. Be sure to thank her for me, and I really appreciate what you guys have done for me as well."

"Without your phone calls of warning my wife and my daughters would be dead," said Bobby Three. "I owe you, Mr. Blackwell, big time."

The Colonel handed Blackwell a large manila envelope of documents. "Here's your intro pack from the Bureau of Race and Resettlement," he told Blackwell. "This pretty much spells out everything you're entitled to as a Homecoming present from the Republic, and how to get it. As a single man you're entitled to a two-bedroom apartment or small house, free for a year, one bedroom to sleep in and one for any storage or professional needs. That's for guys who want to start their own small businesses, fixing watches or doing something by hand, which happens sometimes. You can use that second bedroom for a home office."

"What about zoning laws?" asked Blackwell.

"We don't have any," said Campbell senior. "One of the things you'll be issued by your local BRR when you get where you're going is a middling-thick book in nice, readable fourteen-point type. I think it's about three hundred pages now. That's our laws. All of them. We make it a point of pride to keep them all in one volume; if it ever threatens to get too big, we'll repeal some to make sure we can keep it all in one cover. Anything that's in that book, you damned well better obey. Other than that, you can do anything you want here. Anyway, getting back to accommodation, after the first year you can stay in your BRR housing if you want, at a fair rent, and after four more years as a renter you can buy, if you like, and you'll be credited with the rent you've already paid as your first equity. Most new migrants prefer to move up the ladder, so speak, and so they don't stay in their first Bureau housing, but some do stay in their first

home here, all their lives. Sure we can't persuade you to stick around Missoula, sir?"

"No," said Blackwell, shaking his head. "I think I'll head out to the coast. Seattle or Portland. I've been a bureaucrat all my life, and since I'm too old and out of shape to be much good on a road crew or a farm labor detail, I'm told they'll be finding some papers for me to shuffle, and there will be more of that in the large cities. Besides, I'm a city boy originally, old Boston Brahmin stock. I was even a New Yorker before New York was overrun. Wide open spaces make me agoraphobic."

"That's a pity, Mr. Blackwell," said Bobby. "We hoped you would stick around. My wife is especially grateful to you."

"Yes, I saw her briefly that night," said Blackwell. "Even seen from where I was lying on the ground she's very beautiful, and those are three fine children you have. You're a very lucky man, Lieutenant."

"I am indeed," said Bobby. "Before you leave Missoula, Mr. Blackwell, I hope you'll go up onto Mount Sentinel and visit my wife's mother's grave. It's a national monument now, attracts tens of thousands of visitors every year."

"Funny you should mention it. I actually planned to do just that," said Blackwell in a neutral voice, turning away. "It would seem a good way to start my new life here in this horrible racist dictatorship of yours."

"I'm glad to hear you weren't going to leave without saying goodbye to her," said Robert the elder. "I should mention, Mr. Blackwell, that while we do not maintain a national DNA database in the Republic, the Bureau of State Security does maintain such records in the case of persons of interest, or who might become of interest, or anyone we think might ever need to identify for any reason. We took the liberty of running your DNA from the blood and tissue samples they took from you when you came in here. We found a match."

"Of course you did," said Blackwell with a sigh. He looked up at them. "Well? What are you going to do about it?"

"Were you really just going to just vanish into the Republic somewhere and say nothing?" asked Bobby Three.

"What is there to say?" asked Blackwell, spreading his hands. "No, really, what am I going to say to her? What in God's name could she possibly want to say to *me?* I don't think she even knows my name."

"No," said Campbell senior, shaking his head. "Georgia never told me your name and I never asked, and although I presume your identity is on record somewhere with the WPB in an old intel file from Operation Belladonna, after the war I never bothered to ask then, either. You're right, it seemed irrelevant."

"Nor is it relevant now," said Blackwell.

"You saved my wife's life and the lives of my children," said Bobby. "Don't you think they will want to know who did that?"

"From what I could see, Allura and that kid of yours with the twenty-two were doing quite all right on their own," said Blackwell. "All I did was stumble in at the right moment and manage to get myself shot for my trouble." Blackwell sat down heavily. "Do you know what my reaction was when Georgia told me she was pregnant? I did the gentlemanly thing, and I offered to put the abortion on my American Express card. What am I supposed to say to my daughter? 'Hi, I'm your dad, nice to meet you, glad your mom was a better person than I was and so she didn't have you dumped into a bloody plastic-lined trash bin like I wanted to?' And once all that—once Georgia did what she did during the war for you guys, then my father laid out millions of dollars in bribes to keep my name out of certain files and databases. Otherwise the damned Secret Service would have abducted me and tortured me and dumped me at the bottom of Chesapeake Bay wearing concrete boots. Dad was so pissed off he cut my allowance to the bone and made me get a job, which is how I ended up as a goddamned bureaucrat, and later on as Gabi Martine's zookeeper. I've spent twenty-eight years trying to make sure my name was never associated with hers in any way. I can see no reason to change that policy now. Why should I? What purpose would it serve for her to know? From what I can gather she's happy, she's got a great family and a job and a hobby she likes—is archaeology her job or her hobby, anyway?"

"Both," said Bobby with a fond chuckle. "When she can't do it, she teaches it. Look, Mr. Blackwell, I get what you're saying. Yeah, this is a mess. I have no idea at all how my wife is going to react when I tell her,

but I've got to tell her. I can't keep a secret like this from her, even if it may be for her own good. It's just not done on this side of the Road. Life's partner means just that here."

"Really, son, I haven't got a thing to contribute to the family tree," said Blackwell desperately. "I'm like most white males in America for the past hundred years. I screwed around until I was past forty, when it finally started to dawn on me that I wasn't a kid any more and whatever I was going to do in life I'd better get on with it, although by then I was too old and tired and beaten down by this filthy world the libbies and the kikes have made to start over. I've been going into a cubicle at eight o'clock every morning and leaving at five o'clock every night, and stuffing my body with bad food and my mind with bad electronic images for almost as long as Allura has been alive, and that's *all* I've ever done. Why would she want to know me at all? There's nothing to know."

Bobby Three looked at him. "I think my wife will want to know that she has a father who gave up his whole life, however pointless and futile that life was, who defied the tyrant's laws by crossing that Road into the land of freedom, who attacked a heavily armed thug of democracy while he himself was unarmed, and who shed his blood in order to save her and her children from death at the hands of those who are the mortal enemies of all mankind," he told Blackwell. "Ally has grown up around that kind of man all her life, not the least my own dad here. I think she'll want to know her father is one as well."

"So you're going to tell her?" asked Blackwell.

"I have a better idea, Mr. Blackwell," said Robert senior. "Suppose we get you checked out of this hospital, then we all go up to the Mount Sentinel National Monument together. We'll give Allura a call and have her meet us up there, and when she comes, *you* can tell her. Your call, sir. This is, after all, a free country. Come with us, or head westward to the sea, as you wish."

Blackwell hesitated for a moment, and then said, "I'll come."

"Thank you, sir," said Robert senior. "While we're waiting for Ally, I'll tell you about Georgia."

* * *

It was a warm and sunny afternoon in late May, and the dirt parking lot at the Sugar Loaf United Pentecostal Church on the NAR side of old Jefferson County was as full as anyone had ever seen it. It was Danielle Tolliver's seventeenth birthday, and from now on her birthday would become her wedding anniversary as well. Guests had been arriving at the picturesque white clapboard church, a historic building dating back to the early 20th century, for the past forty-five minutes. Everyone was coming by ground car, since Sugar Loaf Road hadn't been wired for levitational vehicles yet. At least half of the cars bore Montana state license plates; Danny and Johnny Selkirk's wedding was the biggest cross-border social event in living memory, and included most of two graduating high school classes, Jefferson High on the American side and Cataract High in the Republic. It was also the first time that a minister from the American side of the Road was officiating in a church ceremony on the Northwest side. To everyone's surprise, the head of Danny's minor Pentecostal denomination, the Reverend Billy Bob Pritchard, had come all the way from the church's headquarters in Texarkana to perform the ceremony.

Major Tom Horakova of the Bureau of State Security was standing outside the church door along with Lieutenant Bobby Campbell the Third, wearing a subdued but neat zoot suit with crisp seams and cuffs. Since BOSS dress uniform was a simple and unrelieved black tunic and cap with no insignia at all, he decided it was best to remain informal. "Besides, the American guests might have taken me for a hearse driver," said Tom. "I'm actually here in a semi-official capacity, as an observer. Pritchard's church is small, with only about a million members and most of them online or TV only, but they're very conservative in their morals and ever since the hate laws have kind of crumbled away Out There they have been more and more open about their Biblical opposition to race-mixing. Not to mention that like most Protestant evangelicals, they have a lot of successful and affluent people in their congregation. In some respects, this is a very significant gesture Pritchard's making today, crossing the border in more ways than one. It comes close to a political statement. I talked to him a little last night over in Boulder."

"You went Over The Road?" asked Bobby Three in surprise. "You sure that was smart, Tom? Things aren't *that* mellow between us

and them, at least not where State Security agents wandering over the asphalt are concerned. No offense, Ben," he added.

"None taken," said Sheriff Ben Lomax, who was standing beside them, along with Deputy Lewis Brumley. The American lawmen were both in civilian suits, or would have been had either of them been officially there. "I let them use the trailer in the underpass. It was the preacher's idea. Outreach or something."

"Yes, like a drowning man reaches out to a life preserver," said Tom in a low voice. "Arkansas is almost eighty percent non-white now, the other Southern states are worse, and I think these folks have decided the muddy rain won't be stopping any time soon, and it's time to head for high ground. These Community Prosperity Zones near the border are going to need spiritual as well as economic goods and services. I think we may be seeing more of the Reverend Pritchard and his flock."

"Where's Mom and Dad?" asked Bobby Three.

"Inside the church," said Horakova. "Your mother is in the vestry helping the bride put the last finishing touches on her dress and lace and veil, the bouquet, so forth and so on. I'm not sure what-all's involved."

"I thought you were married yourself, major?" asked Lomax. "Wasn't that your wife I met earlier?"

"Yes, but Marie and I were married at a Blot," said Horakova.

"Come again?"

"Asatru ceremony," replied Tom.

"Outdoors, very simple bridal gown, horned helmet for the groom, lots of wheat and ritual cutlery and mead," explained Bobby Three. Inside the church, the organ began its preliminary overture. Bobby looked at his watch. "They're going to begin in a couple of minutes. We might as well go in."

"Oh, sweet Jesus!" exclaimed Brumley suddenly. "Look!"

At opposite sides of the parking lot, the last two arriving guests, two elderly men, had parked their vehicles and were now walking toward the sidewalk that led to the church door. "The old man with the cane, that's Elwood Tolliver coming down from the left side of the lot!" snapped Lomax.

"And that's Ray Selkirk coming from the right!" said Bobby grimly.

"Christ, it never occurred to me he'd come!" said Lomax. "Elwood hasn't set foot on this side of the Road for forty years! It's an ironclad matter of principle for him. Why the hell is he breaking it now?"

"Maybe Elwood figures if a Northman's taking his granddaughter, it's time to settle up," suggested Brumley. "One way or the other."

"You figure that lunatic of yours is packing?" Bobby asked Lomax.

"Is yours?" replied the sheriff.

Bobby thought quickly. "Look, this is supposed to be a wedding, not the last battle of the War of Independence! If either of those two geezers reaches under his jacket, we need to charge fast, grab both of them, disarm them, and throw them into separate squad cars until the ceremony's over. If it doesn't look like they can play nice during the reception, we take them to our respective lock-ups to chill."

"That works," replied Lomax. "Let's see if it's needed."

The two old men stopped at the head of the walk and stared at one another, or glared would probably be a better word for it. Finally Tolliver lifted his bad leg and he spoke.

"I just got one question, Ray. Why the hell did you do this to me? You had me cold that day. Why didn't you put the goddamned bullet through my head and be done with it?"

"The thought did occur to me," growled Selkirk. "Two reasons. The first was that Carol wouldn't have wanted that kind of vengeance. I sure as hell did. Then, anyway. But I knew if she'd been there she wouldn't want you dead, so I just gave you something to remember us both by."

"And the second reason?" demanded old Tolliver.

Selkirk looked at the church, with the organ music wafting from it. "I let you live because I knew this day would come. This day, or something like it, however many years it took."

"Now, don't you *even* start in on some long tard-ass speech about peace and reconciliation overcoming the wounds of old war and hatred and all that happy horse shit!" snapped Elwood. "I won't believe one damned word of it!"

"And I wouldn't offer it," said Selkirk. "Elwood, let me explain something to you. We Volunteers were all scared back then, scared of dying, scared of getting shot or just plain murdered by your crew, scared of the terrible things that might happen to our families and our loved ones, sometimes even scared we were doing some things God might not be able to forgive. But the one thing we were never, *ever* afraid of was that we would lose. However God might judge our sinful souls, He was always on our side. Had been since the first time the white man laid aside his computer and his television set and his big bowl of nachos and picked up a loaded rifle, and showed himself worthy of God's love and assistance. That's what I mean when I say I knew this day would come. We *won*, you arrogant piece of Amurrican cop-shit, and now you're finally over in this part of the county where you can see that blue, white and green flying in the sky!"

"You're a real son-of-a-bitch, Ray!" snarled Tolliver.

"It's been said," Selkirk agreed. He turned and walked down the sidewalk into the church. After a moment, Elwood Tolliver followed him grumpily. The others followed them in, and soon the sounds of *Lohengrin* rose from the organ into the big Montana sky.

Epilogue

Winston Wayne's Escape

Well, my name is Joe McTeer, and I was a Volunteer
In the War of Independence long ago.
I got out of Coeur d'Alene and hooked up with Winston Wayne,
And we headed down to southern Idaho.
When the rising was put down, we very quickly found
That in our own homes we could no longer dwell.
Ah, but many's the lonely cave some form of comfort gave,
And the folks up in the Sawtooth knew us well.

Well, the snow was falling fast on a February night,
When the cabin up near Redfish came in view.
The weather was severe, but a guard was posted near,
Though the dangers on a night like this seemed few.
But some rotten little spy went and called the FBI,
And may I live to even up the score.
For it's when we awoke in the dawn, it was no joke
To find the flashing LED lights at the door.

"Come out, you rebel band!" yelled the agent in command,
"You haven't got a prayer, don't got a hope!
Give up and do it fast, or we'll hit you with gas,
And we'll kill each man we sight on with our scope!"
Says Winston to his men, "Well, boys, here we are again,
And I could swear I've seen this same old flick before.
We held out for sixteen days, and we set the world ablaze,
If we have to we'll hold out for sixteen more!"

The house was set on fire and as the flames rose higher,
We fired through every window all around,
With the tear gas and the smoke we were nearly overcome,
But we never thought to lay our weapons down.
Then a well-aimed sniper round knocked Ted Langenheimer down,
And he rolled across the floor to try and hide.
His AR was blown away and he stared down with dismay
At the blood that bubbled crimson from his side.

He says "Commandant, I'm done. Throw
me down the Thompson gun,
And I'll hold them so you boys can make your break!"
He kicked open the door and the Thompson roared,
And he blew one agent right into the lake.
While he kept them all pinned down, we got out the side and found
That they hadn't yet destroyed one SUV,
Oh generous and brave, young Langenheimer gave
Up his life so his people might be free.

Well before they could reload, we were halfway down the road,
With an armored Humvee snapping at our heels.
We turned the Escalade and we threw our last grenade,
And we blew the Hummer off into the fields.
Driving like a lunatic, on black ice inches thick,
The temperature was eight or maybe nine,
With the low clouds in the sky, their choppers couldn't fly,
And we made it to a safe house down in Pine.

We lost three men that day, but seven got away,
And we all went on to fight to free our land.
Albert Walsh was killed one night in Porterville,
Pat Murphy fell with Murdock's gallant band.
The Commandant and me, also the other three
Lived to see our flag at Longview hoisted high.
Every year we all make a trip to Redfish Lake,
And we drink a toast where Langenheimer died.

—The Second Generation, *Songs of Freedom* album
©Bifrost Music, Seattle

XXXVIII

Remember, Remember, The First Of November

(50 Years and ten days after Longview)

And the band plays Waltzing Matilda,
And the old men still answer the call.
But year after year, their numbers grow fewer.
Someday no one will march there at all.
—Australian song commemorating the battle of Gallipoli, 1915

At 7:30 sharp on the morning of November first the whistles blew again, as they had done at the same time on the same day fifty years before.

The NDF's first wave that rose to cross the Interstate-5 bridge in that dawn half a century ago had numbered over 22,000 men, with as many more behind them in the second wave. On this morning, fortunately without rain, not quite three thousand people began to move across the bridge from the Washington side into Portland, Oregon. The bridge was no longer used for traffic; in order to make it passable for levitational vehicles the engineers would have had to tear down the iron superstructure over the asphalt and essentially rebuilt the archaic structure from the ground up, and so it was decided to build a new bridge down where the old 205 crossed the Columbia, and preserve this one as a historic monument.

On both sides of the old I-5, large crowds stood in the chill morning air, some sitting on bleachers which had been set up for spectators. As the line consisting mostly of elderly men began to move, applause and cheers rang out. Television cameras from news outlets all over the world

focused on the marchers from various vantage points, including cherry pickers and some mounted on the bridge's superstructure. The old men were mostly dressed warmly in civilian clothes, but a few retired old soldiers and sailors and airmen wore uniforms from a lifetime of military service to the Republic. Their chests were decked with medals from the War of Independence, the Seven Weeks War, and numerous Aztlan border campaign ribbons. Iron Crosses were as common as summer dandelions.

They moved slowly, almost at a shuffling pace, unlike the steady and relentless march across the same bridge under fire fifty years ago. Some even carried the same weapon slung on their shoulder that they had borne on the morning of combat. Not all the marchers were elderly veterans of the NVA and NDF; some were wives accompanying husbands, as well as children and grandchildren walking slowly beside their relatives should they need support, in some cases pushing them in wheelchairs. In the lead was a small handful of a dozen or so German men, the last survivors of Conrad Baumgarten's Stormtroopers who had broken the American barricade on that morning. Baumgarten himself had died the year previously, and they were lead by Sergeant Major Günther Thiessen, who had served twenty-five years with the colors and recently retired from running a government guest house in Montana.

Jason Stockdale was among the marchers. The retired chancellor of the University of Montana was now aged 78, but straight as a ramrod, and the cane he flourished as he strolled along the right-hand traffic lane of the historic bridge was merely for show. He was jaunty today in a fawn fedora, ascot, and corduroy jacket with patches on the elbows, as befitted an academic type. His handsome wife who walked beside him was wearing tweeds and sensible shoes. Jenny Stockdale hadn't gotten older, but better; she was living proof that a woman of 69 could be beautiful. Carter Wingfield's order that NDF women not take part in the opening attack on the battle morning had always rankled a bit with Jenny, and she'd let her husband know in no uncertain terms that this time she was coming across the bridge at his side.

Jason chatted for a while with another elderly couple walking at their left. He introduced himself and Jenny. "Shane Ryan," returned

the other man, also wearing the old Party fedora and the NVA roundel. "This is my wife, China. We're from up in Dundee."

"I know you, you're Carter Wingfield's daughter!" exclaimed Jenny. "Didn't I meet you and your husband once during the war, when Red Morehouse came out to Montana? You two were his escort and driver. Only it seems to me you were a little taller."

"That was probably my sister, Rooney," said China. "She and Shane did a lot of work for Red. I was with the South Sound Brigade right up until just before Longview, then my dad more or less abducted me for his staff."

"I kind of put a word in for you myself," commented Shane.

"I know, dear," replied Mrs. Ryan with a smile.

Stockdale spotted another couple moving up beside him, a little old man with a bit of a stoop and a tall, thin white-haired woman with a beaky nose and a bit of a scowl, wrapped in a shepherd's coat and a warm toboggan on her head, who was being pushed by him in a wheelchair. Both wore the Old NVA piped roundel. "Hey, another boy-girl team," Stockdale said. "You know, comrade, seems to me I actually remember you from back on the day itself. Name escapes me, though. Getting senile."

"I'm Cody Brock," said the little old man. "Foxtrot Company, First Battalion, Fourth Infantry. I remember you too, I think. You were the G Company CO, name of Stockton, right?"

"Jason Stockdale," replied Jason. "This is my wife, Jenny. Jenny, this is Comrade Brock, or Lieutenant Brock as he was back then. We walked together for a while the first time we took this little stroll, when there weren't so much by way of cheering crowds."

"Nice to meet you, comrade. This is my wife, Emily."

"Yeah, it's coming back to me—you said you'd just gotten married to some Third Section James Bond chick," said Jason. "This the same lady?"

"That would be me, all right," said Emily.

Cody spoke over to Jenny. "I was an eighteen-year-old lieutenant at the time, and some idiot gave me a company to command."

"The idiot was General Frank Barrow!" snapped the woman in the wheel chair in front of him. "He seemed to think a lot of you, God knows why."

"I wasn't actually on the bridge crossing that morning, because of General Wingfield's no-girls-allowed order," explained Jenny modestly. "I was back at headquarters monitoring computers."

"Screw the stupid order," said the thin woman in the wheelchair. "I was here anyway. I was here before you guys."

"Oh? Where?" asked Jason skeptically.

"Right up over your heads," she said, pointing upward at the iron arches. "I was sitting up there spotting for the artillery and listening to indecent proposals from some Okie Luftwaffe pilot."

"You're Nightshade?" gasped Jenny in astonishment. "We actually spoke on the radio when you got up on top there and started calling the shots. I remember you back-talked General Wingfield."

"Why am I not surprised at this?" said Cody.

"It is an honor to meet a national heroine, comrade," said Jason with a serious bow. "I've heard about your exploits during both wars."

"No, you watched that stupid movie where Kelly Shipman played me as a blonde bimbo, and you've probably seen that telephoto lens shot of Cody and me making out behind the vending machines at the Longview conference," said Emily in irritation.

"Ignore her," said Cody. "She's just crabby because she broke her hip in the bathtub a week ago, and me having to push her across. She wanted to climb up on the girders again."

Up ahead the SS band struck up the *Panzerlied*, serenading the small group of Germans who had just crossed the line on the Oregon side of the bridge, where the American barricades had been set up, and where they had swarmed over the Bremer walls and left bodies of dead comrades lying on the asphalt for a hundred yards until the last of the Portland gang-bangers were dead or had turned tail and run. The marchers walked slowly along after them, mostly in silence now, as memories swelled of men who had begun the long march with them and were gone now. Not just the march across the bridge, but the march that had begun five years before that, when America's carrion crows had come for white children in Coeur d'Alene and been shot to pieces by ordinary people who suddenly, through some miracle, remembered that they came from the greatest warrior race in all of history. Ordinary

people who at long last, at the eleventh hour and the fifty-ninth minute and the last second, had finally had enough.

A few minutes later Jason and Jenny Stockdale, Shane and China Ryan, and Cody and Emily Brock crossed the old barricade line together, with the roar of the cheering crowd in the bleachers and along the river bank below roaring like Niagara Falls in their ears.

"Well, we made it," said Jason.

"Yeah, we made it," said Shane.

"We did," said Cody. They all understood what they meant.

* * *

"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden."—**Matthew 5:14**

The State President of the Northwest American Republic sat in his oak-paneled private office in his official residence in Olympia. He was a fit but elderly man with a white moustache, wearing a neat charcoal gray suit that was patterned after one President Calvin Coolidge had worn at his inauguration, with his pinned decorations over his left pocket and his Iron Cross and Knight's Cross around his neck. He was studying a report in a folder on the desk before him.

He looked up and saw a small golden head looking at him with solemn green eyes over the edge of the desk in front of him. It was one of his great-grandchildren. "Hello," he said.

"Hello," said the little girl.

"Which one are you? There are so many of you that I forget."

"I'm Annie. I'm going to be four."

"Oh, yes. Your father's my grandson Michael."

"Daddy's on the moon," said the little girl.

"Yes, that's why you and your mother are staying here at Longview House for a while."

"Whatcha doing?" asked Annie.

"I am reading a report on steel production in our country," he told her.

"Why?"

"Because I'm the president, and I have to do presidential things, which includes reading a lot of long, boring documents."

"What's them?" she asked, pointing at his decorations.

"Those are medals. I got them in the war. Several wars, actually. I am wearing them all today because in a little while I am flying down to Portland to make a speech."

"Where did you get them?" she asked.

"The state and the army gave them to me because they thought I was very brave, although in fact I just acted like a damned fool where others could see me."

"Why were you brave?" asked the little girl.

"Because someone had to be."

"Why?" she asked.

"So that you could be here today, asking me questions. How did you get in here, anyway?" he asked. "There's supposed to be an SS man on duty outside the reception room. You didn't take him out, did you?"

"I snucked in."

"So I see."

"Why are you making a speech?" asked Annie.

"Because that's one of the presidential things I have to do all the time, so they will let me live in this nice big house," the old man told her. "Sometimes when I make speeches people want me to clatter around with all this junk on my chest. Normally I don't wear these, except for this one." He pointed his thumb at the piped blue, white and green Old NVA roundel on his lapel. He wore it even though he was also wearing the actual decoration itself, which was technically incorrect, but he didn't care.

"Why?" asked Annie.

"Because that is the one I am most truly proud of," said the president. "That is the badge of the Northwest Volunteer Army. There are not many people left who wear it, and I am the last man who will ever sit in this office to do so, which is the natural way of things. My generation has had our day, and now it's the turn of others. Including you."

She pointed to a picture. "Who is that man?"

"His name is Edward Langenheimer. He died very young, and he is the reason I am sitting here today, wearing medals that should have gone to him, and would have if that was the way it has played out. I am here because of what he did, and you are here because of what I and many others did."

"I don't understand," said the little girl.

"You will when you get bigger," promised the old man.

"Annie!" came a voice from the door. A pretty young woman and an SS officer in dress black stood in the doorway. The girl looked flustered and the SS man looked embarrassed. "Stop bothering the president! I'm sorry, I don't know how she got away from me . . ."

"That's quite all right, Mary."

"Sorry, sir, she slipped by me," said the guard. "She's just so little I must not have noticed her."

"You need to be a bit more on the ball, Lieutenant. The ONR might be employing hit leprechauns."

"President McTeer, your limo is on the airpad. You'll have the usual escort down to Portland," the officer told him.

The president glanced at his watch. "I'm not due on the rostrum for another hour. Plenty of time."

"Can I go?" asked Annie.

"Mmmm, I don't think so," said McTeer. "It will only be grownups, there are going to be a lot of speeches besides mine which will bore you to tears—which will probably in fact bore *me* to tears—and I will be staying up way too late to get you home in time for your bedtime. I'll tell you what you can do for me though. I will make you Minster of Heavy Industry, and you can sit here and read this report for me and tell me what to do about our energy-to-output ratios, which are not what they should be." The little girl frowned. "Or you can go down to the kitchen and ask Eleanor to give you some ice cream."

"Ice cream!" said the little girl immediately.

"Good choice. Now go with Mommy." Instead she ran out the door like a streak of lightning.

"She's headed for the kitchen," said his granddaughter-in-law.

"I need to get moving, but before I go, any word from Mike?" asked the president, picking up his briefcase and his overcoat.

"Annie and I talked to him at Tycho Station via satellite link last night. He looks well and he did some moon-gravity gymnastics in front of the camera for Annie, held himself up on one finger, talked to her while he was standing on his head, that kind of thing."

"Hmm," said McTeer, shaking his head. "You know, when I first joined the Party, nobody had walked on the moon for almost fifty years. The Americans made it there a few times, and then they just gave up. They decided they'd rather pay niggers and Mexicans to have babies. Now a century later we're back again. Guess it was all worth it after all."

The girl reached out and touched the Old NVA badge on his lapel. "Mr. President . . . yes, it was worth it. All of it. There's not much I can say except thank you, sir. From me, from Annie, from all of us. Thank you."

"You're welcome," said the old man.