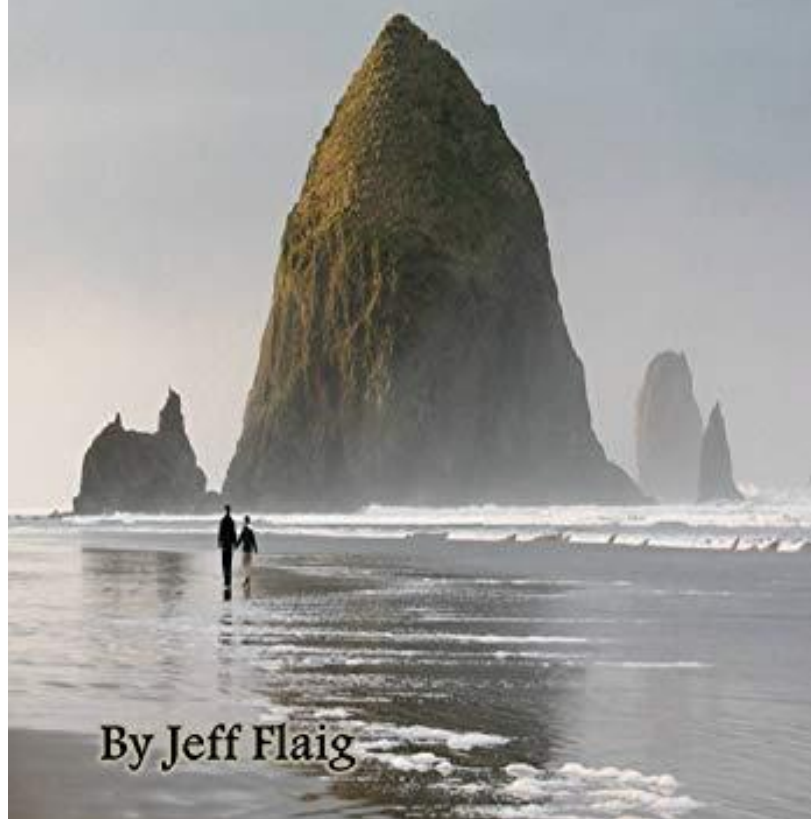


Ramous Rignor –
The Angel Project



By Jeff Flaig

Research

As she made her way down the hallway, Jill encountered her friend Thomas. “Good morning, Tom.”

“Hi Jill, have you seen John Harrison?”

“No, I was looking for him myself. I suppose we can find him together.”

Tom asked, “Isn’t next week your fifteen-year anniversary?”

“Yes, thanks for remembering. I understand they will give me a watch for my fifteenth anniversary.”

Tom rolled up his sleeve to show her his watch. Yep, that’s St. Paul. They give expensive watches after fifteen years. The watches aren’t too bad. Look at mine. It’s a Movado Museum Face. I’m sure it costs around eight hundred dollars new. I wear it all the time. I was told they give a diamond lapel pin or tie clip at twenty, but I’m still two years away.

She asked, “Why are you looking for Harrison?”

“My computer’s hard drive is going bad, and I need to get a new one. I need his approval to have it changed. He

has to supervise all those kinds of repairs, in case anything goes missing,”

“Right, security is tight in your department. Although I’m a head security officer, I can’t even observe that kind of repair. Anyway, Harrison left me a curious note this morning asking about lab 16. A restricted shipment came in from Seattle last night and they put it in lab 16. I passed the lab earlier and found it odd there were no restriction signs hung in the area or on the door.”

“Yeah, that seems odd, since they regulate every lab in the building if it’s not empty.”

“I know. I guess it’s probably not too important.”

Jill and Tom spent the next fifteen minutes looking for Harrison. He was nowhere around. As they passed lab 16, there were still no restriction signs.

So, they went into the lab to check if Harrison was inside. Intending, if for no other reason, to find out who’s responsible for the shipment in the lab, and caution that person, or persons, about their lack of security.

Once inside, they found two large glass containers, both big enough to hold a full-grown human inside. Someone covered both with white tarps.

They lifted the first one to find a brain with its stem sitting near the top of the container. It was sitting in a slimy, murky solution.

Jill lifted the one next to it where she found the top half of a child's body, a little girl. She was also placed at the top of the container in the same or similar solution.

As they were observing, the child opened her eyes and looked at them with an expression of horror.

Jill nearly fell to the floor. As a police officer, a detective, and fifteen years as a security officer for St. Paul Corporation, she has seen a lot of things, but this was more disturbing than anything she'd seen before. "This is a child, Tom!"

Tom was already standing over at a desk reading a notebook. He saw the child and was trying to find information related to the containers.

Tom handed her a notebook. "Look at this."

She read the first page, which revealed why the containers were there.

St. Paul was shipping them to San Diego from the Seattle labs and left them in Portland for two days while electricians finished the electrical circuits in San Diego.

An impediment in the construction meant San Diego couldn't receive them yet, and the Portland complex was already equipped with the appropriate electrical circuits, and was the closest place to keep them until they could move them. Both noticed heavy cables coming from the wall to each of the containers.

It tormented both Tom and Jill by what they saw. Neither one slept that night. What was St. Paul doing? Whatever it was, it can't be right.

They both heard the rumors before, how St. Paul was always playing god. A corporation becomes so big only to assume they can do as they please, often acting above the law.

One time, Jill came across a group of children being herded through a hallway. Afterward, she heard loud screams and crying. She planned to check it out when she acknowledged the restriction signs preventing her from doing so. After two minutes, everything became quiet. She never saw the children again.

Jill dreamed all night about the child in the container. In her dream, she was walking the halls with those other children, and they were all screaming as they

entered the lab and stood around the child in the container, all of them wanting her help.

This time there were no restriction signs, so she determined to investigate further, even if it cost her job. That was a child in the container who knows whether the other brain stem belonged to another child.

Tom wrestled with those same thoughts throughout the night. He needed to do something before they moved the containers to San Diego.

Since Tom hardly slept that night, he rose early and left for work. Being so tired from lack of sleep, he almost ran into another car, lifting his head just in time to slam on his brakes. “*Man, I’m tired,*” he thought. Now, he was mad at St. Paul for kidnapping his sleep.

When he got to work, Jill was waiting for him outside his lab.

Jill only managed a whisper. “We need to do something.”

“Yes, I know. I couldn’t sleep last night. I kept seeing that little face when I closed my eyes.”

“I had the same problem. Any suggestions about what we should do?”

“What would other people do? I mean it’s not every day you find a child, a live child in a lab, in an incubator no less.”

“No, no, you don’t. I suspect anyone who found what we did might go to the news or other media with evidence of the wrongdoing. That should bring St. Paul under investigation and hopefully protect us, Whistleblowers.”

“I agree, we need to go to the media.”

“Tom, they aren’t moving them until tomorrow, and they have hung no restriction signs so far. I passed by again this morning. So, tonight, after everyone goes home, we can go back in and collect whatever information we need to expose what St. Paul is doing with that child.

“Tom, do you understand they will review the surveillance tapes tomorrow night? Even though St. Paul doesn’t place security cameras in the labs, the halls are crowded with them. If they find anything missing and catch us in the hallway outside the lab, they will fire us the following morning, not to mention the legal charges they will threaten us with. Are you prepared to go through that?”

“There’s no other option, and, I can’t just walk away. I can’t. I keep asking myself if she’s the only one. How many more are there? I can’t walk away.”

“Exactly! So, let’s meet outside the lunchroom after everyone leaves work. Does 6 PM work for you?”

“Yes, see you then.”

Tom walked to his lab and Jill left for her rounds.

The day crawled along for Tom, who fell asleep at the table he was sitting at during lunch. Beth, a fellow researcher, tapped him on the shoulder to wake him. “Wake up, Tom. Have a late-night last night?”

“Not really, just work-related insomnia.”

“I know how that feels. I wouldn’t get any sleep if it weren’t for Saturday night. That’s the only night I can sleep all night without waking up thinking about work. If it weren’t for all the money we make, I’d find another job.”

Beth laughed and Tom smiled as they walked back to their lab.

The last group of employees left the building just before 6 PM. It was empty except for three security guards.

At 6:10 PM Jill made her way to the lunchroom where she found Tom standing at the entrance waiting for

her. They made one last comment whether what they were doing was the right thing. Both agreed it was.

Once they got back into lab 16, they both took videos of the scene and packed up everything they could find.

When they examined the rest of the information on the desk, it became apparent what was taking place with those inside the containers. Most likely it was illegal, and at least an act against humanity.

There was a large safe in the lab's corner. All the labs contained a safe for securing secret research materials.

Jill was a chief security officer for St. Paul and held the highest clearance in the building. She held the keys to every door and memorized the combination to every safe in the building.

St Paul hired three people in each building and gave them alone that kind of access, expecting no one to use those keys or combinations except in an emergency. There were over forty safes in the Portland location.

Jill opened the lab safe, and they found three more boxes of files and other research material related to an

experiment called the Angel Project. They took everything and left the building.

Once outside the building, Tom said, “Jill, this is insane! What are we going to do?”

“Well, we need to disclose this before they review the security tapes tomorrow night. Tom, you need to take the files to your house. I’ll come over early tomorrow morning and we can go over the material. We’ll figure out then how to expose this. I’m sure we will lose our jobs, and I’m sorry for getting you involved.”

“Although, I’m terrified, I can’t worry about that. I understood St. Paul’s policies before I got involved. Once we expose this, we won’t have anything to worry about. So, let’s get this information to the media as soon as possible.”

“Okay, Tom. I’ll see you in the morning. Goodbye.”

Jill left for home, and Tom took all the material to his house. He poured over it through the night. He uncovered a lot of disturbing information in the files. It was hard trying to fathom the experiments St. Paul was conducting and had been doing for years.

Tom thought how his findings would blow Jill’s mind when she found out what the rest of the files had to

say with all the scandalous things that have been going on, including the mischievous reason for St. Paul's incorporation.

He stayed up all night and called in sick that morning. He assumed he would only return to work to be fired, anyway.

Tom expected Jill to come to his home around 8 AM. While waiting, he turned the TV on to watch the morning news. As the news came on, he was overcome with terror.

Jill and her family were dead. The reporter called the act a murder-suicide. She said Jill's husband killed her and their two girls during the night and shot himself afterward.

He knew Jill's husband would never kill his own family. St. Paul had them killed. He thought, *How did they find out so fast?*

Now Tom was hysterical, so he packed all the files and put them in his car. He spent the rest of the day at the post office, the bank, and the police station.

Once he got to the police station, he stopped the first officer he saw. “I have information concerning the death of the Avery family. Can you help me?”

“Go to the second floor and ask for Detectives Hill and Rodriguez. They are in charge of that case.”

When he found the two detectives, they brought him into a small conference room and asked him to sit and tell them what he thought happened.

He showed them the video he took of the lab with his cellphone. He explained what he and Jill found and believed St. Paul killed Jill and her family.

Hill said, “I investigated the scene at the Avery residence myself. It was a murder-suicide, and our Medical Examiner agrees with me. Mr. Minor, are you responsible for their deaths?”

“No. St. Paul murdered them because of the information we took yesterday.”

“Mr. Minor, when I reviewed the video you showed us, I have to ask, did I observe anything criminal in your material? I would have to say no. Unless you murdered the Avery family, or know who did, the matter is closed as far

as it concerns the Portland police. It was an open and shut case of murder-suicide.”

Hill stopped and stared at him. “Mr. Minor, did you steal that information from St. Paul?”

“No, I’m a researcher for St. Paul, and the information I showed you came from my cellphone.”

Tom only showed the detectives the video on his cell. After that, it was clear they turned suspiciously towards him.

After about a minute of silence, the detectives sat back in their chairs and continued staring at Tom. It was now clear they would do nothing about his friend’s murder.

“Thanks for coming in, Mr. Minor. If you come across anything concrete, please contact us.”

Hill led him to the exit.

He was now questioning himself whether the research St. Paul conducted was illegal. It may not have been illegal, but Tom was confident it was unethical in the court of public opinion. Because of that, he was sure St. Paul would have to stop.

He left the police station at 2 PM.

As he was leaving downtown Portland, he saw a dark blue sedan was following him. He stopped to get gas, and the vehicle stopped as well. He stopped at a small convenience store. The car parked across the street and waited for him.

He needed to get somewhere safe.

Then he thought of his friend Peter. *Peter would help me out.*

At around 4:30 PM, Tom pulled into a supermarket three blocks from Peter's home. The sedan pulled into the same parking lot. Tom figured they wouldn't follow much longer before approaching him. They weren't even trying to hide the fact they were following him.

He entered the market and slipped out a back exit.

From there he ran three blocks, turned right, and continued two blocks. He then made another right turn and proceeded six blocks, which brought him behind Peter's house.

He cut through the back of the neighbor's yard and hopped Peter's fence, expecting or hoping no one saw him. Peter's neighbor didn't appear to be home, but he was uncertain whether another neighbor on the block could

have seen him sneak through the yard. All he needed was for them to call the police on him and direct those men to Peter's home.

After stashing his briefcase in the bushes, next to the back fence, Tom pulled a lounge chair onto the patio, next to the back of Peter's house. He nervously took a seat in the chair.

He feared the wrong person might see his tall, gangly form from the other side of the fence. After all, he stood six foot seven, and his bright red hair and freckly face stood out like a stoplight.

Ten-foot arborvitae and rhododendrons obscured three-quarters of the backyard, but that was only slightly reassuring.

Peter spent several spring and summer vacations, turning it into a secret garden, which made it difficult, but not impossible to see the backyard. Then there was fifteen feet of naked fence running alongside the driveway where anyone could observe the whole backyard.

As he sat there feeling naked, he imagined the sun would have felt good, if he wasn't so afraid. "Man, Peter, where are you?"

He wondered if he should leave town and not involve his friend. It was a tough decision he was wrestling with.

Instead, “Come on, Peter. Where are you?”

He shifted his attention to the fence along the driveway, expecting at any second a mysterious face, an assailant, would pop up and catch him. So, he pulled the lounge chair closer to the house and behind the garbage cans.

Forty slow, labored minutes later, Peter pulled into the driveway.

It was now 6 PM, and Peter was home late because of a budget meeting.

Tom peered over the gate to see if he was alone.

He recognized Peter’s five-foot-ten-inch frame from behind the fence, but held off calling out until he was positive it was him, and to make sure he was alone. He couldn’t help being paranoid.

It was Peter all right, his short friend with his smart military haircut and goatee. Tom was sorry for what he was about to involve Peter with.

Peter has worked for a local School District as a business manager and has done so for the last fifteen years.

As he stepped out of his car, while fumbling around with loose paperwork, Tom stuck his head out through the gate and hailed him in a whisper. “Hey, Peter.”

“Hi Tom. What’s up? What are you doing in the backyard?”

He put his fingers to his lips and gestured for him to be quiet. “Peter, let me in the back door. I need your help.”

Peter did as he asked.

He and Thomas have been friends for nine years.

They first met when Thomas was giving a science lecture at the local high school for a group of talented and gifted, TAG, seniors.

Thomas introduced AI, a field of science that fascinated Peter, as part of his lecture. So, he attended the assembly.

They bumped into each other backstage afterward and got into a discussion about the lecture.

He told Peter it was his first one and asked him what he thought. Peter told him he did a remarkable job and

how he did not get enough and wished he spoke longer on the subject.

Thomas mentioned to Peter he was lecturing the same evening at the University of Portland. Peter attended, and they met again afterward.

Thomas brought his girlfriend, Cindy Halstead. She was a ninth-grade Science Teacher in the same School District where Peter worked. She helped to bring Thomas to the high school for the lecture.

Peter has been friends with Cindy since she got hired with the School District ten years earlier.

They went out for coffee that night, and the two remained friends since.

Tom always made fun of Peter's baby face. Peter always made fun of Tom's clothes, which hung on him like a scarecrow. When you're so tall and thin, it's hopeless to find form-fitting clothes.

Frequently, when Tom spoke, you would need to pause on every word.

He often repeated himself with less intelligent detail so others could follow what he said. St. Paul speculated he had an IQ around one hundred ninety.

He liked Peter because Peter always held the conversation. Well, Peter learned how to shake his head like he understood what Tom was saying.

Actually, they were only alike in that both exhibited a similar sense of humor and loved to laugh at their own dumb jokes.

Most of the time, it was a lot of cerebral work for Peter to carry on a conversation with him.

Tom almost chose a different route in life as he played basketball in college and was approached by several MBA scouts, but he rejected the sports career to work for the St. Paul Research Corporation, as he chose science over sports. That was eighteen years ago.

He and Peter often talked about St. Paul. St. Paul was an international leader in several innovative fields of scientific investigation, including artificial intelligence, robotics, quantum and astrophysics, and even stem cell research.

Much of what St. Paul did was for the US government and deemed top secret.

Even though Peter enjoyed discussing Tom's research in artificial intelligence and robotics, Tom often

redacted much of those conversations with, I can't talk about it, or I can't tell you why I would have to kill you. Sometimes, his tone came across as serious.

Peter often lamented that he pursued the wrong field of study. Instead of settling as a Business Major, he should have gone into a scientific field, and he regretted his decision.

He often asked Tom to keep an eye open should any positions open in their business department. He would have left the District in a moment's notice to work for St. Paul.

St. Paul's annual budget was in the billions. Its annual medical research grants alone were thirteen billion.

Budgets for other scientific research departments were several times that amount.

Peter was positive St. Paul needed more accountants, and they regularly sent their business professionals to other countries. Peter thought at least he would love the travel.

Because St. Paul provided research for most of the big corporations worldwide, St. Paul recruited just about every kind of Ph.D. you can imagine, and often scouted

potential research partners right out of high school, world-wide.

They recruited Tom in his third year at MIT, when technology was more archaic. They paid his tuition for three PHDs, which included math, robotics, and computer science, AI in particular.

Also, Tom carried several other master degrees, and was a perpetual student.

He was within fifteen credits of a medical doctor. It was mind boggling considering how much education he endured. Often, Peter considered himself a caveman compared to him.

Once inside, Tom said, “I need to leave town, and I need to get out today.” He paused and stared at Peter, “But first, I have to go get Cindy.”

Cindy was the most important person in Tom’s life. Peter thought it was unusual that they never married after such a long relationship. Both said they enjoyed their alone time.

Tom told him that’s what he appreciated about her, but Peter perceived both of them actually dreaded commitment.

“Peter! If they find me, they will kill me!”

“You’re not making sense, Tom. Slow down. Tell me who wants to kill you and why?”

“I can’t tell you. It will put you in danger.”

“Okay. If telling me is going to put me in danger, what are you doing here?”

“Please. Peter. I need your help!”

“Okay, what can I do?”

Tom looked in the fridge to find something to drink. He took a glass from the cupboard and filled it with lemonade and drank it in two gulps.

“Come on, Tom, you’re messing with my head, right?”

“No, this is no joke. Yesterday a woman I work with, my friend, Jill, and I were looking for a man named John Harrison when we walked into a lab we shouldn’t have gone into. We saw things in that lab we shouldn’t have. What we saw was so bad that we both decided we needed to expose it.

“So, last night she and I returned to the lab after everyone left the building. We took photos and video of everything in the lab. We also confiscated all their research

documents, including thumb drives from a safe in the lab. Peter, I'm freaking out, this is serious!"

Tom poured himself another glass of lemonade. "The less I tell you, the better it will be for you. I don't know where else to turn."

Peter ignored his comment. "What was in the lab? Why did you go inside? Are you saying St. Paul is trying to have you killed?"

"Yes, because they have already murdered Jill's family. We thought they wouldn't find out until tomorrow that we took the files from the lab. We intended to turn the research over to the news media today. I've never seen anything like that in my life, and in my wildest dreams, I have never imagined St. Paul or anyone, other than Dr. Frankenstein, could perform experiments like those in that lab. Again, I've seen remarkable research projects performed for St. Paul, but nothing this horrible."

"So, you two will become whistleblowers?"

"Well, yes, that was the plan. Today we hoped to finish examining the material and give it to at least a couple news outlets."

“Okay. I presume you said, were, the meeting never took place? And, instead of meeting with Jill, you hid in my backyard?”

Tom was so emotional he became hoarse. He poured himself a third cup of lemonade and took a drink.

“Peter, they discovered Jill, her husband, and two children dead in their home this morning. They ruled it a murder-suicide. I know both Jill and her husband, and their conclusion is preposterous. That was the cause given. Someone murdered her and her family and covered it up.”

“That’s terrible, and you’re saying it has to do with what you and Jill saw in the lab? Why don’t you tell the police?”

“I did. They harassed me and asked me if I killed them. I told them I didn’t, and afterward, they told me if I come across any more information to get back to them. Morons!”

“Wow. They wouldn’t listen to you?”

“No. Peter, after talking to them, I’m not so sure what St. Paul is doing is illegal, and that’s a big problem. In today’s world, St. Paul might have every legal right to practice that kind of experimentation. Probably, the best we

hoped to do was expose them to the public and hope for public outcry. I'm sure they killed Jill and her family, but by the time anyone can prove it, they'll bury the rest of us next to them. I want to expose them, but I don't want to die to do so."

"That makes sense, but you're making references to things you haven't told me about yet. You said something about experimentation. What exactly are they doing?"

"I'm sorry. I'm extremely upset and probably not making any sense to you. What's most important about what I'm telling you is that St. Paul killed Jill and her family, and I believe they're capable of killing me and having it swept under the rug. Before that happens, I need to get the files to the media. Once the information is made public, I'll contact the police again. Afterward, they might come to find me, but Portland isn't a safe place for me right now."

Tom's face turned white. "Oh no,"

He ran out the back door.

Peter followed him to the door as he ran across the yard to the bushes and returned with a briefcase.

Once back inside, he handed Peter the briefcase. “This briefcase contains all the information we needed to go public. Please hide it and if I’m found dead, figure out how to get it to a news outlet.”

“Do you have any suggestions?”

“I’m not sure. In the past, St Paul gave kickbacks to individual reporters so they wouldn’t print bad articles about the Corporation. It’s a rumor I’ve heard around the office for years. Unfortunately, I don’t have a clue who those reporters are. I guess I could have given it to a reporter who might give it back to St. Paul without it seeing the light of day. You or I will have to find a reporter we can trust, probably someone outside the Portland or Salem area. Again, if they kill me, make sure you can trust the person you give them to. Just be careful. You can’t just give them to anyone.”

“All right, Tom.”

“I don’t expect to survive this. That’s why I’m leaving them with you until I can get back and retrieve them. There are more files. I’ve already figured a way to get them to you, should I need to. I’m positive if this turns bad for me, you’ll figure out what to do. Besides, right now

Cindy's safety is my primary concern. I need to go get her."

He gulped down the rest of his lemonade.

Peter was a little confused because he was speaking so intense and fast, and fear saturated the room, which made it harder to comprehend.

Tom put his hand on the briefcase. "This briefcase contains research papers, four thumb drives, and two cellphones with videos. There's enough information in the case to give a cursory understanding of what kind of experiments St. Paul is conducting. I can't imagine what I have gotten myself into. I can't believe Jill and her family are dead. They were my family." His hands shook as he lifted them off the case.

"Well, you need to calm down. It will do you no good to lose control."

"Peter, this is insane! Will you help me out, bra?"

When he said 'brah,' Peter became suspicious. He glanced at the briefcase and then Tom. Nothing he said, other than the fear behind what he was saying, made sense.

“Bra indeed, you’re out of your mind! Are you messing with my head? Honestly, I don’t believe corporations like St. Paul murder people.”

“Don’t be an idiot! They do, and if you don’t do as I ask, I’ll have to find someone else, but I don’t know who else I can trust other than you outside of work. I don’t want to tell Cindy, and I’m sure they’re looking for her. I called her and we planned on meeting at 8 PM in front of Chew’s restaurant. Peter, I have nowhere else to go.”

Tom walked into the living room and turned the TV on to a local news channel and waited.

Peter opened the fridge to find something to eat while evaluating what he was being told, and the intensity in which he was being told. As he foraged, he thought, *Should I listen to him? Should I worry?* Tom was so serious.

Tom shouted, “Come here, Pete!”

Peter joined him in the living room just as the news about the murder-suicide of his co-worker and friend Jill was being updated.

Now, it all became too real, and he needed to figure out what to do. He never considered anything like this could happen to him or his friends.

His eyes focused on his friend, whose face was displaying both pain and horror.

“Thomas, I’m sorry. I’ll do whatever I can to help.”

Tom needed his help, and he was now all in.

“You need to hide the information that’s in the briefcase and don’t be conspicuous. I’m sure they’re figuring out who my friends and family are, and it won’t be too long before they figure out where they all live. Take it out of the briefcase and put it in another container. I’ll take the case with me when I leave. Since they’re following me, they will assume I have the files with me. We need to act fast, and I should get going. I need to get to the restaurant and meet Cindy. Anyway, it’s too dangerous for me to remain here any longer.”

Peter pulled a box from the utility room and put all the material into it. He took the box and put it at the bottom of a stack of similar boxes.

Tom said, “Thanks, Peter. You’re a good friend!” as he peeked out the front window.

“You said someone was following you?”

“Yeah. Before I came here, two men were following me. I led them to the market. I parked there, entered, and slipped out the back. So they won’t know where I’ve gone, but it won’t take them long before they find out I gave them the slip. So, I need to go to meet Cindy. Let me use your cell.”

He called a cab to meet him on the corner three blocks the other way from the store where he parked his car. It would take him to get Cindy.

Then, he said goodbye, handed Peter his cell back, and a manila envelope.

“See you soon, Peter.”

He left through the back door. Peter watched as he jumped the fence and cut back through his neighbor’s yard.

If what Tom told him was true, he was also in danger. Despite that, he was more angry than afraid because they made his friend afraid.

Peter opened the envelope Tom gave him. It contained cash, one-hundred-ten thousand dollars in total.

He stood there with his mouth gaping for a while until he realized that he too needed to have an escape plan.

There could be no waiting for St. Paul to figure out who he was. The money only made him more worried. There was no other reason for Tom to have given him so much money. Consequently, he spent the whole night figuring out what to do. By morning, he was so fatigued he called in sick.

At 10 AM, Grace, his secretary called. She told him two different people called into the office asking about him. She upset both callers because she could not give out personal information about him. Fortunately, that was District policy.

He retrieved the box and left. First stop was the bank to withdraw his bank accounts, both checking and savings. When done, he was carrying one-hundred-sixty-five thousand dollars to go on the run with.

Peter planned to leave town, expecting Tom would find him if he needed to contact him.

Also, he needed to find a personality in the media he could trust. Perhaps a small-town reporter would be best.

It has been a while since Peter visited the coast, so he was off to the beach, a place both he and Tom were familiar with, assuming he would come look for him there.

On his way, he stopped at a mall and purchased a pay as you go cellphone, a burner. Right away he called work to inform them he would be on vacation for the next month.

Peter accrued three months of vacation and was previously encouraged to use it. He would use it now because he didn't have a choice.

Grace tried to get him to tell her what was going on, but he kept the conversation to a minimum. He hoped it would blow over before having to return to work.

Once at the beach, he rented a cabin under an assumed name, Jerry Reckless, and paid cash.

It devastated Peter when he saw the evening news. They killed Thomas and Cindy. Both died in a single car accident on Highway 26, halfway up Mt Hood. Portland News said they drove over a cliff. It made him afraid, but sadder and angrier that this happened to his good friend.

While they were showing pictures of the vehicle, he recognized the briefcase lying next to Cindy's car. It was open. He assumed they were trying to make a run for it. This was even worse than he imagined. They were his friends. *What was so top secret that people were being killed for it, by a famous corporation, no less?*

Peter did not eat or sleep again that night. By morning he was so tired he passed out and didn't wake until 2 PM. At which time he walked to a little store on the beach and bought a roast beef sandwich and soda.

Peter was overcome with sadness as he walked along the surf, stopping only to take a bite of his sandwich and stare out onto the ocean. His sandwich just didn't taste right. *What am I going to do? They killed my friends; Thomas, Cindy.*

He returned to the cabin at 6 PM. There was no more news about his friends.

Dead Witness

Peter sat in his rented cabin contemplating how to get Tom's files to the media. First, he thumbed through the phonebook looking for local news stations, hoping to turn the information over to one of them. He felt foolish looking for someone to turn the files over to when he, himself, didn't know what they included. What would he tell them?

Eventually, his curiosity got the best of him. He didn't know at the time, but that's when he committed the dumbest act he has ever conceived in his life. He opened the box and looked over the material.

It contained research papers regarding robotics, artificial intelligence, and stem cell research. A summary document explained how they created beings from their research.

Several pages contained a narrative written by a man named Dr. John Harper and dated 1996.

Peter wondered how the information was relevant. It was over twenty years old.

As he continued reading, he concluded that Harper, or someone, wrote the documents at a scientific level way beyond his comprehension, perhaps beyond any modern-day scientific advancements.

Most of it was difficult to understand, although he was smart enough to get a general idea of what was reported in the narrative.

He read as much as his brain could handle as most of it was technical hypothesis. It left him wondering why they included stem cell research with the other two fields of scientific study.

He grabbed the thumb drives. Each one was in a single small baggy and attached to a single 8 ½ by 14 sheet of heavy paper and was titled ‘Angel Project 1987’.

Each thumb drive contained a labeled, with a date written above them.

The first label read, Dana Interview, 1998, the second Dr. Stone, Dr. Houston, 2006, the third, Abortion, Twenty Years, 2009, and the fourth, Death of the scientists, 2009. It looked more like evidence than research. Below the four thumb drives was a list of other titles going back to 1987, but nothing related to those titles was included in the material Tom gave him. It appeared to Peter several

important thumb drives were missing from the files, because most of the titles on the list included areas in Artificial Intelligence, Computer Science, Engineering, and Neurology.

So, Peter pulled the first of the thumb drives from the bag and inserted it into the blue-ray player provided by the resort.

It presented Dr. Harper sitting in an office behind a desk, and a barefoot, beautiful young red-haired woman, wearing jeans and a blue hoody. She was sitting in a chair next to him, facing him. When the camera angle changed, she moved almost mechanically. Peter thought it was odd.

Harper asked her several questions. She responded with a woman's voice, although she answered his questions, childlike, and when she answered she would play with her clothes and twist her hair.

Peter thought the woman herself was interesting. He assumed she was the AI referred to in the reports by how she moved and reacted to the questions.

He'd seen AI robots before, talking and moving around, but she wasn't like those. She was more lifelike, like a real young woman, but different.

The camera moved to her face. She had freckles that jumped around as she smiled in half-smiles. Her bright blue eyes looked like real eyes and they moved like natural human eyes.

He questioned himself if she was AI or not. Perhaps she only acted like a robot.

About twenty minutes in, she softly asked for candy, which was too strange. Harper asked her to repeat the question.

“I’m ok. I can wait.”

“Wait for what?”

“I’m hungry, can I have some candy?”

“Sure, you can, as soon as we finish.”

Peter concluded it might have been a mental institution, and she was a patient.

He continued to listen to the conversation for a time as Harper asked the young woman about her life, what she remembered about her birth, and her parents.

In his mind, he thought again about the advancements they achieved, even though the material was over twenty years old, and despite those advancements, he

didn't believe it was a reason to kill his friends. There must be more to it.

He pulled the first thumb drive from the player and inserted the second. It included the same Doctor Harper, along with two other scientists.

One was Dr. David Stone, who said he was a specialist in Biology and Artificial Human Mechanics, and the other was Dr. Samuel Houston, a specialist in Pediatrics and stem cell research.

Peter still thought it was a weird group of people to be working together, but he could imagine the implications.

Then they explained what they were doing.

Peter was beside himself as Dr. Huston explained how they were using the minds and organs of aborted fetuses, keeping them viable, and integrating, or growing them onto titanium skeletons.

Then Dr. Huston explained the process. "All the fetuses we use are O-Neg. That blood type will not be rejected by any transplanted materials or organs of another blood type, which is important to our success."

He pointed out several glass containers, stationed one next to another. They looked approximately seven feet long by three feet wide and two feet tall. Each container held a body, whether dead or alive, Peter couldn't tell.

Peter thought, *This is more like a sci-fi movie than reality.*

Dr. Houston put his hand on top of a container. "They live in these coffin size glass containers for fifteen months, filled with a chemical solution like an embryonic fluid. First, we place a full size, thin and hollow, titanium skeleton in the container. It's almost like a rigid mesh. Afterward, we lay cells from the aborted child over the skeleton and encouraged the cells to grow. We grow the body by stretching the cells until they completely cover the skeleton. Fortunately, the stem cells from the embryos have a fantastic ability to grow on any material that doesn't destroy those same cells. Titanium proved to be the perfect material for our purpose. While cultivating the being, we take various parts of the fetus and use its immature cells to create multiple organs and extremities. We only need to attach like-minded or similar cells to those parts of the body. We train it to grow a hand from cells of the fetus's hand, etc."

That made perfect sense to Peter. Other than using body parts from a fetus, especially in this demented age, there was no reason to think what the doctor was doing was illegal, certainly not worth murdering several people over. He poured himself a glass of water to help stay awake and sat back down to watch the rest of the video.

“Now, as the cells grow, they stretch the material and apply the correct cells until the creature has a complete hand, including all the vessels and tendons necessary to move like a natural hand.”

Dr. Houston pointed to another container about half the size of the larger one. This is where we encourage all the different cells to grow and multiply.

“It’s phenomenal how fruitful they are, but that fertility is useful for only fifteen months. We must use them during that specific time period. Otherwise, we must discard them. We’ve made great advances with the process, adjusting the solution until we have a fifty percent success rate. At first, only one in five fetuses survived the procedures. We found out each cell’s DNA has built into it the components, or programming, to grow the whole extremity or body part we harvested them from. For example, if it was a hand, it will grow the fingers, the nails

and all the parts nature intended to grow to become a functional hand. We can't take credit for what it does on its own. It's designed within the DNA. We can only manipulate the growth. It's astounding. We're not sure if human DNA is an element that occurs in nature or perhaps an alien force placed it here, maybe a force alien to the earth, whether on purpose or by accident, we don't have a clue. Maybe, DNA grew in the past and has become extinct in its natural form. What we understand right now is we can only draw DNA from a living entity to create another living entity. DNA might make us question whether there's a God, but we're not trying to argue about the morality of what we're doing. Our only purpose is advancing scientific research for extending the life span of humanity. Again, we can grow a complete body by placing parts of the body into the solution, except for the brain and its stem."

Dr. Houston pointed at a whiteboard with several diagrams on it. "We develop the respiratory system, circulatory system, and the nervous system simultaneously. From there, we concentrate on the parts of the anatomy for audio and optics."

It was approaching 1am, and Peter was nodding out. He decided to watch the rest of the video in the morning. He did not sleep well that night, and despite his tiredness,

he woke up almost every hour in a panic. He hated himself for being afraid. Thomas had become a close friend, as did Cindy. He wrestled every time he woke, trying to force himself back to sleep. *I don't know how much more I can take!*

The cabin was equipped with coffee and a coffee maker, so when he finally woke for the day, at around 11 am, he made himself some coffee and sat down to watch the rest of the video.

After reviewing five minutes of the video, Dr. Huston continued, “Scientists made hundreds of attempts to put parts in the right place, attempting to complete the process within the allowed time frame, creating what we would consider a normal human being. As I pointed out earlier, we’re now at a fifty percent success rate.”

Next, he lifted a vile of a liquid that looked like a mix of mucus and water and presented it to the camera. “This embryonic fluid that each is nesting in will supply all the subjects needs until fully developed.”

He moved the camera close to one container. Peter saw it contained an almost complete body of a human being. It was breathing and looking around while lying in a semi-fetal position, which gave Peter the shivers.

“Once, the whole body is complete and the systems operating, we perform a heart, lung and kidney transplant replacing the creature’s current organs. We do so because the lungs, heart, and kidneys are too young and weak to survive outside the nest. After the transplants, they can survive outside the container, but must rely on artificial equipment for at least three months. Our process takes one and one-half years to complete.”

He walked over to another white board that had several posters hanging down the front. They looked like medical posters of the organs and circulatory system of the human body. Another one had all the parts of the human brain and brain stem. Parts of it were lighter than the rest, with small colored cables leading away. Peter assumed those parts were emphasized for a reason.

“Six months into the process we supply the creatures with knowledge through a process of Neurostimulation. Dr. Simon Arch and Dr. Henry Stickle developed the process in 1993. It allows us to upload information to the brain through an array of neural stimulators connected to four lobes of the cerebral cortex. Prior to Arch’s and Henry’s scientific advancement, the creatures emerged from the containers unable to exceed the mentality of a two-year-old child. They needed a boost

early in the process to spark their minds to receive information. We could never achieve success until Arch and Stickle's breakthrough."

The coffee made Peter's stomach growl. Maybe it wasn't the coffee, but the video that upset his stomach, maybe his sadness. He turned the blue ray off and sat in silence for the next hour, thinking about the last couple of days. How does everything appear to be going along just fine, and then Wala, everything is spinning out of control? He knew he was not going to make it to either Thomas' or Cindy's funeral. He couldn't even call to find out when they were for fear of being found by St. Paul.

He had to get something to eat, so he walked to the little store for a sandwich and a cup of chicken soup. It was a beautiful day on the coast. He wanted to enjoy it, but he could not. *Snap out of it!*

After lunch, he turn the blue ray on and finished watching the rest of the videos on the thumb drives.

Do. Huston continued, "We initiate the Neurostimulation process by sending a small electrical charge to the temporal lobe which wakes the brain up. We continue applying charges until we get a response. If we don't get a response within three days, the subject isn't

viable, so we discard it. If we get a response, we continue with set intervals of small electrical shocks until the hippocampus responds. Once we get the desired response from the hippocampus, we continue the charges on and off. If all goes according to the plan, when we stop, we should get an expected response where the brain was expecting the next charge. That means the brain is creating memories and is ready to operate at a higher functional level. Once the higher brain functions activate, we attach receptors to points in the Occipital Lobe, associated with interpreting visual stimuli, and areas within the Parietal Lobe that interprets sensory perception. When complete, we teach the subject through a method of sensory reception, virtual reality. The human brain is nicely pliable at that stage and once we get past the self-awareness, infant, and toddler stages we can apply twenty years of knowledge and history in the matter of a few months, and they will accept the information as fast as we can provide it to them. We haven't figured it out yet, but for the first five years outside the container, the subject's language skills are equal to a young child. We don't know why they are delayed in such a way, even though they have an IQ exceeding two hundred, they express it as a child. When they turn five, a change in their mental capacity takes place within their

brains. We're not sure what changes, but from that point on, they're more like a young adult."

Peter spoke out loud, "This is sick!"

Then Houston explained the chemicals called candy, most of which Peter did not comprehend. He explained in scientific terms how it was a nutritional food supplement, with the texture of baby food to a candy bar. It's what the creatures eat until they can digest normal foods. Peter understood it was the candy Dania asked for in the first video. He guessed they must have experienced hunger. *How weird.*

They were making half-human, half mechanical beings, or whatever they called them, and growing them in incubators. WOW!

Dr. Harper came back to talk about the being, the young woman, who sat next to him. Dania was only three years old when he interviewed her in 1998. He explained she learned at a rate several hundred times faster than the average human being. "When she reached five years old, she had an IQ of over two hundred. Beyond that, there were no tests available to measure it."

Dania was now twenty-three years old. Peter wondered what she was like now.

When the second video finished, Peter put in the third one.

It was a Dr. Stone explaining the sickening business of purchasing the bodies of aborted babies while they were still viable.

He explained how they purchased fetus parts back in 1988, particularly, their brains and subjected them to a solution that would keep them viable, until they could implant them into the titanium skeletons, and how it took over six hundred attempts before the first implant succeeded.

Then he spoke about the disposal of the bodies, by sedation and cremation, at two years old, because of their inability to grow intellectually beyond a two-year-old, confirming what Dr. Huston said earlier.

When Peter considered the actual number of lives taken by St. Paul, he became angry, and had to back off from watching any longer. He spent the next twenty minutes looking at the other paperwork. He found most of it just as disturbing, so he turned the video back on.

Stone explained how they learned to remove the brain and part of the stem to satisfy the new Neurostimulation process. Then, he repeated several of the

same methods Houston already revealed but added more detail regarding the changes from the initial processes.

It was startling how Stone didn't have a problem with buying viable children from the abortion mills. He mentioned the kickbacks St. Paul paid to make these fetuses available. Peter found all this disturbing and unbelievable, but the doctors explained the deplorable act in such a natural way it made sense.

At one point, Dr. Stone suggested clinics paid women to get pregnant and abort their babies for this research. It seemed to Peter what Dr. Stone revealed was damning enough to offer the media the story.

Near the end of the video, Dr. Harper came back on to explain the progress of the being he named Dania. She was now eleven years old and exceeded expectations.

He stated her intelligence was immeasurable, yet she displayed many childlike desires and tantrums. He expressed concern because the mechanics she possessed gave her above normal strength. She was continually bruising herself during fits of anger. He almost appeared afraid and mentioned she and the rest of the First Gens continued to exhibit periods of paranoia, although slight it was a concern and they were monitoring it.

He said it was only a problem for the first-generation beings. It was not a problem for the second-generation beings, and he said Dr. Houston was working on treatments to control the problem for the first Gens.

Then, he talked about another two hundred sixty other beings in assorted stages of development.

No sooner did he finish talking about the other beings when a figure from behind took his head right off at the shoulders. Blood splattered everywhere, and it blacked out the camera.

This can't be real, and must be part of a horror movie, he thought as he got up and began walking in circles, quickly running his hands through his hair.

The living room rearranged itself after he saw that. The room was lit, but dark and shadow-like at the same time. Perhaps he was hallucinating. He thought he might have a heart attack, but it seemed more spiritual. It was pure evil.

He stopped watching the video and retrieved another glass of water.

Once he calmed down, he pulled the third drive out of the player and put in the fourth one.

The fourth video showed the lab where the three doctors were lying on the floor in a bloody mess. He heard a man say the woman Dania killed all three.

A nervous man, who identified himself as a St. Paul security officer, came on and explained what happened. He mentioned Dania was responsible, but she and another one hundred fifty-two beings were captured and detained. Peter turned the player off again and thought, *I can't take this.*

He wrestled with those thoughts for another half an hour before he watched the rest of the video. There was no turning back. He needed to know everything before he turned it over to anyone. After the video finished, he reached into the box and pulled out a cellphone. He knew it contained the most recent information regarding the files.

Thomas' cellphone showed Jill opening the door to the lab and then recorded her walking down an aisle passing two of the same containers displayed in the earlier videos. She called them incubators.

She pointed at them. "These are new in this building. They brought these in two days ago. I figured they forgot to put the proper restriction signs in place. I'm certain they don't want us in here, but this is too disturbing to ignore."

Peter knew the video came from Tom's cell, as he turned the cell to one incubator.

The machine contained part of a young child. He directed his camera at the face of a beautiful young baby girl. They were keeping her alive, even though it was only the top half of her little body. The child opened her eyes, which caused Tom to jump back momentarily. Peter could tell by the way the camera moved.

Tom explained she was a late-term aborted child. He said they read in the files how St. Paul kept them alive until they could remove all the necessary parts to implant into a skeleton, and then he explained how it was not right and how they planned to take all the files related to the experiment.

Peter became sick to his stomach again and bent over to throw up in the wastebasket. It was one thing seeing it in the videos, but when Tom, his friend, presented it, he had to throw up.

At the base of her container, there were several organs they removed from her aborted body and were saving for cell harvest.

He knew Tom didn't conduct stem cell research, but he was competent enough to explain what was happening in those machines.

Peter asked himself, "What has happened to mankind? How can anyone practice such evil?"

For a moment he considered it was justice, and the doctors deserved punishment for what they were doing.

He became frustrated. This is what Jill and her family, Thomas and Cindy died for.

Peter needed something other than water, so he wandered back over to the little store for a soda. He was in a daze all the way there.

On his way back, he came across a young woman sitting in the sand. She was very pretty and the light from the setting sun lit up her beautiful young face, although she appeared to be alone and out of place. He asked her if she needed help.

"No, thank you."

Then, she pulled a small handgun from her pocket and pointed it at him. "Where are the research papers?"

That shocked Peter, but he maintained his composure. He thought for sure he was going to die. She stood up, looking at him.

“I want those research papers, now!”

Afraid, Peter told her they were in his cabin.

“Good! Which is your residence?”

He pointed to the cabin where he was staying.

Once he pointed out his cabin, she reached around and pinched the back of his neck and broke it. He fell dead into the sand. She retrieved the paperwork, the drives and disappeared down the beach.

Ramous

“Hello.”

“Good morning Chief, did I wake you?”

“Yes, Paul, you did. Do you need me for something? What time is it? It’s still dark out my window.”

“It’s 1 AM, Sir. We found a body on Netarts beach. A young couple, out walking, came across a man lying in the sand.”

“Did you call the Coroner?”

“Yes, but when I was on the phone with him, the gentleman took in a big breath, so I called an ambulance and they carted him off to Lincoln City.”

“Okay, so why are you calling me? I’m supposed to be up at 6 AM for a doctor’s appointment in Portland. Can’t you handle this on your own? You’re in charge, right?”

“Yes, Sir. Ram, this is intriguing, and I expect you would be more interested in knowing what’s going on now, rather than finding out when you get back.”

“All right, what is it, Paul? What’s so intriguing?”

“Well, the victim was staying in a cabin on Netarts beach. The manager said the victim used the name, Jerry Reckless, which we’ve already concluded was an alias. He gave me the key to the man’s rental cabin. John and I entered the cabin where we found a large backpack containing a lot of cash, over a hundred sixty grand. Upon further inspection, we found a thumb drive in the video player labeled St. Paul Corporation, so we checked it out. It’s disturbing. You need to see this for yourself, in case we need to call in forensics from Portland.”

“All right, I’m on my way.”

Paul, Ramous’ lead officer and John, a local state Sheriff, were waiting for the Chief in front of the lobby at the small resort. They led him to the cabin where Daniels was staying and ask him to have a seat. Once he sat, Paul turned on the video player.

Before coming to Tillamook, Ramous spent twelve years as a detective with the Portland Police Department.

When the position of Police Chief came available on the coast, in the small town of Tillamook, he jumped on it.

He grew up in Tillamook as his parents owned and operated a bed-and-breakfast on the beach in Garibaldi.

Both of his parents died six years ago in an auto accident on Highway 101, and he inherited the hotel and another two acres in Manzanita.

He left the bed-and-breakfast to sit empty until he moved back to become Police Chief at the Tillamook station. That was five years ago.

His position as Police Chief covered all the communities from Astoria to Newport. Even with forty-five experienced officers under his command, they always called him in when something big or unusual happened. This fell into the category of unusual.

Ramous watched the whole disturbing video. “I guess I’m not going to Portland.”

He’s seen many deranged things while being a detective, and this fell into that category.

“Paul, did you say the ambulance took the man into Lincoln City? Did you find any identification on him?”

“Yes, they took him to Lincoln City, but we found no ID on him.”

“Okay. Don’t call the F-team in Portland. Gather all the evidence and take it into the station. Put it in the vault. I’m going to Lincoln City.”

Ramous was too tired to drive to Lincoln City, but he needed to contact the victim to find out what happened.

His gut feeling made him suspect it could have been a corporate or mob hit. Suspicious bodies have washed up on the beach in the past, all proving to be one form of a hit or another.

The Salem and Portland Police Departments usually took over those investigations. He knew this because he was friends with most of the detectives in both cities. It was never a problem for Ramous to get information from either Portland or Salem for any investigation.

He thought about his time as a Portland detective, but recalled nothing about the deaths of those doctors or anyone else concerning the St. Paul Corporation. He heard of St. Paul, but didn’t pay much attention to what they did.

Once at the hospital, he inquired about the man brought in from Netarts. Doctor Peterson came out to speak with him.

“Hello, Doctor. Can you tell me the condition of the man from Netarts?”

“He’s still unconscious. Someone broke his neck, and they did it in such an unusual way.”

“How so?”

“There was only a small area of bruising around the break. I would expect a great deal of bruising around his whole neck. I’m not sure how, but someone committed it with such precision as to only separate the vertebra around the spinal cord, with no cuts or breaks in the cord itself. The small bruise on the back of the neck looked like someone hit him with just a finger. He was fortunate because they hit him off to the side of his spinal cord. Any harder or more centered, it would have killed him. He will be out for a while. Chief, I’m confident this was not an accident.”

“Yes, that’s what I was thinking too. Do you have an idea of how long he will be out?”

“No clue. Even if he woke up, he probably won’t be able to talk for a while or move. Also, we have a medevac coming. We need to fly him to Portland, where they can fix the injury. This hospital doesn’t have the proper equipment to operate on him. Once we get him stabilized, we will send him into Portland. I’m sure he will survive.”

“Thanks. Did you find any identification on him, or have you figured out who he is?”

Ramous’ cell rang. It was Paul on the other end.

“What’s up, Paul?”

“John found the guy’s car. It was registered to a Peter Daniels, from Portland. I’ll be back in the office in ten to fifteen minutes and I’ll continue to check on him.”

“Good. He’s still unconscious and they’re flying him into Portland. Call me as soon as you get info on him.”

“Yes, sir.”

Dr. Peterson waited for Ramous to finish the call. “No, we didn’t find his ID. We took a blood sample for DNA purposes. If you like, we can send those off to a lab for comparison to the national database.”

“That won’t be necessary. We found out who he is. His name is Peter Daniels. He’s a Portland resident. You

should check whatever medical records the state might have regarding him. That should help you treat him. When you check the medical records, do it in such a way as not to alert anyone. I don't want his real name out there because he's part of an investigation, and at this moment, I want no one to know he's still alive. Someone tried to kill him, and I suspect they might come back to finish the job. I assume he will go to O.H.S.U. in Portland. Please tell them to put him under an alias. I know they're familiar with the procedure in this kind of situation."

"Yes, I do have a secure method to access health records with no one hacking in, and all Oregon hospitals are up to date with using aliases. I need to get back to my patient. So, thank you, Chief, and goodnight."

"Goodnight, Doctor."

On his way back to Tillamook, Ramous thought about the video, and the man who was in a coma. It almost hurt to think about the two years he spent in a coma, himself.

Ten years ago, another driver fell asleep at the wheel, crossed the center line, and hit him head-on, just north of Olympia, Washington. He was on his way to visit his friends, Hank and Maggie, in Seattle.

He ended up in a coma, and was placed in a convalescent home as a John Doe, for two long years. The other driver, a young Canadian man, died at the scene. Thieves took both drivers' wallets, including cash and ID, while they lay unconscious on the road, and before he was found, a chop shop came by and stole both vehicles and left him and the other driver beside the road. The Police didn't find them until the next morning. Their vehicles were never recovered.

The hospital sent DNA samples to local and national databases for both drivers, but Ramous' did not show up in the system, neither did the young Canadian.

The whole incident and the lost time still make Ramous mad. How could an act as simple as checking a person's DNA get so screwed up? It left his family and friends to wonder what happened to him for two years. That was the reason he planned to visit the doctor this afternoon. He didn't remember the whole two years, and the doctor was helping him recover his memories, as well as his physical injuries.

Ramous hated being reminded of it. He struggled because of it and pushed it to the back of his mind. That was the only way he could deal with it.

He spoke under his breath, “I hope Daniels doesn’t spend two years in a coma.”

Then he turned his attention back to the problem at hand and how bizarre the video seemed to be. Maybe it was part of a horror movie? However, it looked real.

Again, Ramous did not recollect those murders while he worked for the Portland Police Department. They could have taken place while he was in the coma, but at some point someone would have mentioned it. As far as Daniels is concerned and involved, he could only speculate what took place. Before too much longer, he predicted this was a case he would turn over to another department, and that would be the end for him, so why bother. He’d just keep notes and evidence and pass them along to the appropriate agents in Portland or Salem.

Ramous was too tired and headed home instead of back to the office. He was sure Paul would call him with any pertinent information regarding their victim, but hoped he’d wait until late morning.

With a doctor’s appointment in the afternoon, he expected to go into Portland, but he would reschedule, although he thought he would go into Portland when Mr. Daniels became conscious.

Ramous slept in until noon. He didn't want to sleep so late and expected Paul to call with information on Daniels before then, and that perturbed him.

Even though he put Paul in charge, he expected Paul to keep him in the loop.

Ramous called into the office and Clair answered. She was the day switchboard operator.

“Good morning, Clair. Is Paul around?”

“Good afternoon, Chief. Paul isn't here. We got a call two hours ago about a serious car accident on 101. I have not heard from him since he left. I've tried getting him on the radio, but he has not responded.”

It was the policy for every officer not to leave their vehicle without a portable. Paul understood the importance of the policy, and both Ramous and Clair thought it was unusual that he would act irresponsibly.

“Where was the accident?”

“101, near Pacific City.”

“Keep trying to get him on the radio. I'll drive over and find out what's up. I'll chew him out for not carrying his portable.”

“Yes, sir, I will.”

Ramous took a shower, got dressed, and drove to Pacific City where he found no patrol cars on the highway. He made several passes, all the while calling Paul on the radio. No answer.

He tried looking up Paul's vehicle location on his cell, but it did not show up on the GPS.

He radioed back to the station. "Clair, have you heard from Paul yet?"

"No Chief, I have not. You haven't seen him?"

"No, and I've passed Pacific City twice and found nothing. He isn't answering my calls. I tried locating his vehicle on GPS, but it's not showing up. Can you pull his vehicle up on the GPS in the office?"

"I've already tried that. He doesn't show up here either. Hold on one second, I'll try again."

After a minute, she replied. "He's not showing here either, Chief."

Every patrol car, marked and unmarked, was equipped with the most advanced location system available. That was necessary because of the remote locations the officers patrolled.

Something was wrong, and Ramous was painfully suspicious. During the time the two worked together, Paul has never broken protocol. Ramous' first concerns were about last night's events. He hoped the vehicle was having problems, and not Paul.

Ramous drove into the station. Once there, he took a seat at Paul's desk to go through his computer. He wanted to find out if Paul uncovered information on Mr. Daniels.

When he turned the screen on, it was blank and wouldn't respond. He turned it off and back on. Still, it presented only a blank screen. Knowing all the computers in the building were networked, he logged in as Paul at another workstation. As a matter of policy, the Chief was given access to everyone's login and password.

Once he logged in, he opened the history and found where Paul logged into a national search database with Peter Daniels name attached to the end. He clicked on the address. It returned to the login. After he logged in again with Paul's information, a screen came up with several bits of information about Daniels. It included all the general information about where he lived, where he worked, his birthdate, his family, etc.

There was nothing special about Mr. Daniels.

Then the screen went blank, and the computer refused to work afterward. Ramous was now dealing with a virus. Ramous found enough information on Daniels, so he didn't risk looking again.

“Clair, have you found Paul yet?”

“No, Chief. He has not responded, and I'm worried.”

“Me too. Okay, put out an all-points bulletin. Let's find him. Also, call the computer guy and get him over here. I believe we have a virus or worm in our system, and I suspect it's related to our man on the beach.”

Then, Ramous called into O.S.H.U. in Portland to find out the condition of Daniels. Daniels was still in surgery. There were no other updates.

He chose the rest of the day to find his second in command. He and Paul became friends and spent time outside of work hanging out together. Ramous often invited Paul and other officers over to his home for BBQs.

He and the all the other local officers spent the whole day looking for Paul. They did not find him, or his vehicle. There were miles of highway where a car could leave the road and remain hidden for years.

The station purchased a GPS designed to work, even after an officer totaled the vehicle. That was the main reasons they installed the system in the patrol vehicles. Someone else disconnected it. Ramous didn't believe Paul would have done so.

Ramous assumed all of this tied into Mr. Daniels and the St. Paul Corporation.

Tomorrow he would contact St. Paul after finding his officer first.

On his way home, Ramous radioed the station and spoke with Sheri, the swing shift dispatcher, and asked her to keep him updated regarding Paul.

“Sheri, please call me every two hours and keep me up to date, and make sure everyone's looking for him.”

“Will do, Chief. You will be the first person I call if we find him.”

“Thanks. I'm going home for the night. You can contact me there.”

“Yes, Sir.”

When Ramous got home, he made himself a bowl of soup and a sandwich. Afterward, he retired to the sitting

room with his dinner. He built a fire as he took a seat in his favorite oversized chair.

Before he ate, he said a prayer, *“Lord, Paul is a good friend of mine. He’s a fellow believer, and I’m confident your desires will be accomplished. I’m asking you to protect him in whatever situation he’s in. I don’t want to act like a pessimist, but I have a terrible feeling about this. Lord, above all, please let your will be done. I praise and love you, Lord. Thank you.”*

Ramous quietly pushed himself back in his comfortable chair for several minutes, thinking about how the house often felt empty. Being it was a bed-and-breakfast, and larger than most homes on the coast, it was too big for just one person, but it was home.

Recently, he sold all the hotel furniture his parents bought for the bed-and-breakfast, except for three rooms to use as guest rooms.

Most of the other rooms remained empty, although he made plans to fill them back up again.

Even before he moved back, he’d been thinking of reopening the place. Now, he wasn’t spending as much time there as he would have liked to, causing him to believe it shouldn’t be lifeless any longer.

He grew up in the house and loved every scarce minute he was at home.

Ramous was thirty-nine years old. He stood five-eleven with a stocky build. He weighed just under two hundred pounds, and like Daniels, he looked much younger than his age.

Everyone commented when he told his age, saying how young he looked. He looked to be in his late twenties.

He attended high school in Tillamook. Afterward, he attended college at the University of Pennsylvania, which had the best criminal justice program in America. He was always interested in the field.

As a kid, he often conducted his own investigations around the neighborhood, which often got him into trouble with the local police, nearly killed twice.

The Police Chief at the time recognized Ramous' enthusiasm and encouraged him to attend the University.

Chief Charlie Williams was a devout Christian. He was the person who led Ramous to the Lord. They became friends and when Charlie retired; he put in a good word for Ramous, which guaranteed him the position.

Paul also grew up in the neighborhood. He was five years younger than Ramous. Ramous saw him around the neighborhood when he was a kid. He never hung out with him and only spoke to him twice before becoming Police Chief.

While Ramous was in college, Paul joined the local police department and has been an officer since.

While he was young, Williams led Paul to the Lord.

Ramous understood whatever happened would be God's will. In life and death, God's will would always be perfect no matter how much it hurt, and Ramous was hurting for his friend Paul.

Ramous felt guilty for thinking of the hotel when his attention should have been on finding his friend.

He spent the next two days looking along the highway for any sign indicating a vehicle might have gone off the road. He took many back roads, hoping to find Paul's patrol car.

Meanwhile, he kept calling into Portland checking on the condition of Daniels. Daniels made it through the surgery, but was still comatose in the IC unit.

As Ramous was sitting at his desk researching the St. Paul Corporation, he received a phone call from his ex-wife.

“Hi Ram. How are you?”

“I’m fine, Janet. What about you?”

“I’m okay. What I called you about was a visit I had ten minutes ago. Two suits showed up at the door asking about you and your affiliation with a St. Paul Corporation. I knew nothing about your affiliation with St. Paul and told them so. They kept pressing me to answer questions I didn’t have answers to. Afterward, they became rather rude. I closed the door in their faces. What’s going on?”

“It’s an investigation I’m working on. There’s nothing to worry about. Next time tell them we’re divorced, and I live here in Tillamook. Tell them I don’t discuss my work with you and they should contact me.”

“I told them that, but they kept pressing. They asked if I heard anything about the St. Paul Corporation. I told them no, I hadn’t. They were disrespectful and made me nervous.”

“All right, I plan on talking with someone from St. Paul today. I’ll ask them not to bother you again.”

“Okay, thanks, Ram. Now, how are you doing? I miss you. Is there any chance you will be in Portland anytime soon?”

“I plan to be in town tomorrow and throughout the next week concerning this investigation.”

“Would you like to stop by?”

“No, we’ve talked about this before, Jan. I like it the way it is now, you on your side of the fence, me on mine.”

“Are you ever going to forgive me?”

“We’ve talked about this before too. I forgave you a long time ago, as per the Bible. That doesn’t mean we should get back together. I fought for this relationship until you moved in with Johnson. Because you did, I was free to leave. Now, as far as we go, I’m concerned about your salvation, just as I would anyone else. You need to reconcile with God, not me. Thanks for calling and telling me about the suits, I’ll make sure they don’t bother you again, have a good day. Goodbye.”

“Goodbye Ram. I’m sorry.”

Now, Ramous worried others might get involved. He couldn’t understand why they contacted his ex-wife, Janet.

He and she met in college. She was working towards a special education teaching degree. They met his freshman year and married right out of college.

They were married for five years when she got involved in an affair with another teacher in the District she worked for.

A year later they divorced. Five years later, Two years after his accident, Ramous took the Police Chief position with Tillamook and moved back to the coast. Janet stayed behind with her new husband in Portland, until that relationship crashed, and she has been after Ramous ever since, telling him it was all a big mistake. He wasn't having any of it.

Ramous called all the local phone numbers for the St. Paul Corporation with no luck. He'd been trying to get ahold of someone in the corporation for several days. Finally, he gave up, walked out to Clair's desk, and asked, "Could you please contact St. Paul and find out if there are any phone numbers that can get me in contact with upper management? I'm not having any luck, Thanks."

"Yes, Chief."

For some reason, the suits in Portland and Salem didn't think this was mob related. It was now his

responsibility, and he was falling behind on the investigation. He was more worried about Paul missing than anything else.

A few minutes later, Clair received a call from the state troopers. “Ramous!”

“Yes?”

“The state troopers called. They are putting out an APB because John is now missing.”

Ramous stood silent for a moment, *Not John too! I hope he’s okay. God, please protect him.*

“Okay, let our officers know.”

Concerned, he took another trip along 101.

Five miles up the highway, Ramous pulled off on a side road leading to John’s house. Once there, he met two state troopers who worked with John.

Officer Sandale met him in the driveway. “Hi Chief Rignor, how are you?”

“Not so good for the past few days since Paul went missing.”

“Ya, we have been looking for him for two days too, and now John is missing. Sheriff Parks didn’t show for

his shift this morning, and John has never missed a shift without notice or good reason. His patrol vehicle and his personal vehicle are both in the garage, so, John is around here somewhere. I'm sure he is. Right now, we have two patrol officers combing the beach as we speak, in case he took a walk and something happened where he couldn't make it back home. They left over two hours ago. Let me contact them and find out where they are."

Sandale radioed the officers on the beach. "Hey guys. Did you find Sheriff Parks?"

"Nope, we have found nothing so far. We're headed back now and expect to be to his home in half an hour."

"Thanks." He put his radio back onto his vest.

"What do you think, Chief? Do you suspect foul play? He would never disappear on his own accord."

Before Ramous could answer, a voice came across Sandale's radio. "We found him, and it's bad."

"Where are you guys?"

"We're a quarter-mile south of you. Jerry, we sent for the Coroner."

Both Jerry's and Ramous' expressions turned downward, being dumbfounded by the news regarding John.

Ramous and Sandale drove along the beach where the other officers were waiting.

Upon approaching the officers and informed them they found John lying under a pile of grass and seaweed. They touched nothing, but could tell John's neck was broken by the position of his head to his body.

One officer told Jerry and Ramous they called the Coroner and asked if they should call in forensics?

Ramous answered. "Yes, but let me call them. We can't leave him here all day."

Ramous pulled his cellphone out and called into Portland. "Hello, this is Police Chief Rignor from Tillamook. We have a deceased officer just south of Pacific City. You need to send a forensics team, immediately."

"We can have a team drive down. They should be there in three hours."

"Officer, let me speak to the Director of Forensics."

"Hello, this is Bill Sailor, Head of Forensics, what can I do for you, Chief Rignor?"

“I want a forensics team down here south of Pacific City within the hour. We have a deceased officer, and I do not want to leave him on the beach all day waiting for a team to drive here. There will be no argument, period.”

“No problem, Chief. We have a chopper on the pad and I’ll send a team now. They should be there within an hour and a half. We can’t fly any faster.”

“Okay, thank you. I’m forwarding GPS coordinates as we speak.”

“Thanks for the coordinates, I have them. Now, let me get on your request, Chief. Please call me back should there be any problems.”

“I will and thank you.”

Ramous looked down at John, which made him ill. He looked over at Jerry, whose eyes were tearing up.

Again, Ramous assumed all of this was tied to the man Daniels and the St. Paul Corporation.

He was so busy looking for Paul, it left no time for the real investigating. Now, he was mad that he was getting no help from Portland or Salem, and other than a few inquiries into Daniels’ condition, and trying to find phone

numbers for St. Paul management, Ramous has accomplished nothing.

The forensic team showed up, took several pictures, and combed the area around John's body.

Once they finished, David Burns, the local Coroner could examine the body. He determined his neck was broken and was the cause of death.

He also said they dumped John in the place where he lay. Bruises around John's body showed they carried him to the spot after he was deceased.

David said, "The person who put him here was above average strength. To carry his 200 plus pound lifeless body would have taken an extraordinary amount of strength, and by the bruises around the body, it was a single individual who carried him. There's no sign he was placed in the back of a vehicle, so that person had to carry him to this location. Also, whoever broke his neck used a considerable amount of force. John did not resist, and he died quickly, because there are no defensive wounds on his hands or arms. I hate coming to a crime scene like this one. John was my friend. He was a good man and officer. I'll give you more information once I get him into the lab."

Then David turned to Jerry. “I’m so sorry. I know you two were good friends, and I’ll call you and the Chief when I have completed the autopsy.”

David left with John in the back of his van. It was a sad moment for the state patrol officers and Ramous.

Ramous wanted to go home and pretend none of this happened. He expected he was in for another moment of dire sadness when they find Paul.

He prayed, “*Lord, please help me understand all of this. I need strength to get through this. Thank you.*”

Ramous drove back to John’s house. Someone forced the back door open, but nothing else appeared out of order.

He assumed the person murdered John at home and carried him to the spot where they found him. Ramous assumed the way they covered him with grass and seaweed; they didn’t want him found right away.

Ramous was having a hard time thinking this through, because Paul was still missing, and now he was emotionally torn and feeling ineffective.

Zoe

As the officers stood discussing what happened to John and why, Ramous' cell rang. His security system alerted him someone was breaking into the bed-and-breakfast.

He became so fixated on getting home he didn't ask for backup. Once home, he pulled his revolver and slowly made his way around to the back door. It was open.

He saw the door was not forced open and assumed he forgot to lock it that morning before he left for the office. It was cracked only slightly, and wind could have pushed it open.

He opened it and entered cautiously. After going through the whole house, he relaxed and put his revolver away, convincing himself that it must have been the wind.

So, he walked to the back door and locked it. As he was walking back through the house, heading for the front door, everything went black.

Ramous woke tied to and sitting in his favorite chair in the sitting room. Across from him was a gorgeous, young looking woman. He was taken by her beauty.

Was she going to murder him? How in the world could such a beautiful woman murder him? What an insult to his pride. He was dumbfounded that such should happen to him. Perhaps, a mean gangly looking thug should have a vendetta against him and take his life while he enjoyed breakfast at a local diner, but not this pretty young, innocent-looking, woman. Please no!

She stared at him as if deciding what to do with him.

“What do you want?”

She didn't answer. Instead, she continued to stare at him.

Ramous believed he was going to die. They would find him out on the beach like they did John.

“Why did you kill my friends?”

“I didn't kill your friends. Dania Blue killed your friends.” Her voice was soft and feminine, causing Ramous' heart to skip a beat.

“Who's Dania Blue?”

“She’s the first. She’s sick and mad at mankind and wants to kill every human being. That’s a terrible combination. My name is Zoe. I’m a Second Gen, and I’m number 3. We are trying to stop Dania and her companions.”

“Are you affiliated with the St. Paul Corporation?”

“Yes, they created us. It was a horrible experiment gone wrong, taking us from our mothers and making us into these machines. Nothing good came from it, and now one hundred and fifty-three first Gens are attempting to destroy humanity. I can’t blame them, but what they’re doing is wrong. It’s not right to murder.”

“I have no clue what you’re talking about, other than seeing a video about the murder of three researchers at St. Paul. I heard the name Dania on the video. Apparently, she killed those men. Otherwise, I’m clueless. Is that true?”

“Yes, that information wasn’t supposed to be revealed to the public. The video is the reason your officers were murdered. Dania is trying to cover her tracks so she will not be found out. Also, St. Paul has tried to keep the information from the public because it would destroy the Corporation. That’s why they sent the second Gens, like me, out to stop Dania and the First Gens.”

“What’s a Gen?”

“Gens are human beings created and grown in the lab by the St. Paul Corporation. There’s information in this briefcase explaining our situation.” She pointed to a briefcase sitting next to her.

“Zoe, you said officers. Does that mean my officer Paul Hawk is dead?”

He didn’t want to hear the answer for fear of what she was about to say. He stiffened his mind and body in preparation.

“Yes, Paul Hawk is dead. Two First Gens buried his body and his car on an obscure beach in Florence, just north of the sand dunes. I’ll give you the GPS coordinates before I leave. I’m here because you’re next on Dania’s list. You are lucky to be alive. She never does this, but she has missed you twice. Beware, she’s watching. I and others will watch too. Hopefully, we can catch her before she kills again.”

The news regarding Paul nearly paralyzed him, but he expected it. He tried to prepare for it, but expecting or preparing didn’t make it easier. He stared at Zoe for the next five minutes with the images of Paul’s and John’s faces flashing in his mind.

Zoe patiently waited for his response.

“Typically, I would have a million questions about whom and what you are, but I can only concentrate on the death of my friends at this moment. What can I do to bring those responsible to justice? Do you know where Dania is?”

“No, Dania has a GPS inserted in her body, but she and the others have removed it. We second Gens are also equipped with GPS, but we have all dismantled those systems for our safety. Without the GPS, it’s next to impossible to find them. They can hide anywhere. We must catch them when they’re moving. We know she’s in the area, but we don’t know where.”

She adjusted her position and her face, “Chief Rignor, I’m the one who broke Peter Daniels’ neck. I broke it in such a way as not to kill him. We captured the First Gen assigned to kill Peter Daniels, and I took his place. I retrieved the information from Daniels and hid it, although I missed the thumb drive in the video player. Again, Dania killed the officers because they saw the video, and you’re next. I’m sorry.”

“So am I...”

“First Gens are looking for a list of over a thousand women who aborted their children. Children used for the Angel Project experiment. The list with several other files are still missing. We expected it to be with the information I took from Daniels, but it was not there. If Dania gets a hold of the names of those women, she and the rest of the First Gens will kill them all, and their families. It would be hard to stop them once they retrieve it. Those women are the most hated by First Gens among humans.”

“Are you telling me that his is some sort of pro-life movement?”

“No, it’s more than that. It’s about protecting information leaks. Daniels came across that information and ran to the beach with it. Now, here we are. Also, Peter Daniels is still in danger. I know he’s at O.H.S.U. in Portland under an alias. The First Gens don’t know he’s still alive, but when they find out, they will send another to finish the job. We are confident they found out I posed as their operative, and will figure out I didn’t kill Daniels, and they will seek to finish the job. At the time I put Mr. Daniels out, the First Gens were unaware they sent the Second Gens to stop them. Now, I’m sure, because the research information was not delivered to them, they have

figured out we're involved. Because of our involvement, they will become more active. Many people could die."

"What does that have to do with me? I'm only interested right now in catching those responsible for the murder of my officers and friends. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand, Chief. I'm sorry. I wished we could have prevented it. We didn't expect them to kill anyone except Daniels. We prevented his death, but could not prevent the deaths of your friends."

Ramous understood, but understanding didn't remove his pain or diminish his determination to arrest those responsible, although he knew this young woman sitting before him did not do it. She planned to catch those same people.

"Clearly, you didn't do it, but I'm still furious. Please, if you can, help me catch those responsible."

"That's our intention, Ramous, and why we're here."

Afterward, Zoe filled Ramos in on more of the atrocities committed by St. Paul. She filled him in on the process and the results.

He listened, but it only proved to be more heartache.

Finally, she stood and set the small briefcase next to Ramous and returned to the other chair. In the briefcase is a copy of all the information Daniels was carrying with him. Again, those files will fill in the blanks I don't have time to explain. St. Paul doesn't want the information to get out. I'm going against my orders in giving them to you, so put the briefcase in a safe place in case it all falls apart. Mr. Daniels' intended to give this to the media. It's not the right time now, but when the time comes, you will need to do so."

When she finished, she stood in front of Ramous, staring at him.

"I hate what St. Paul has done to me and others like me. They had no right, and it was wrong. St. Paul needs to be exposed, but before then we have to stop the first Gens."

Another kind of anger built inside Ramous. He was now angry about his perception of the immoral acts perpetrated on this young woman.

He now saw before him a child, an abused child. His heart became saddened for her and others like her. He almost felt compassion for them, again more heartache.

“I’m sorry, Zoe, for what has happened to you. It was not right, and not what God planned for mankind. I even have a deep sense of sadness for Dania, despite what she is trying to accomplish. I can’t imagine the anger she must have.”

“Chief Rignor, God has his plan. Creatures like me are judgment. We are the wrath of God for the murder of millions of children in the womb. You don’t believe God would ignore the cries of all those children, do you?”

He whispered, “What a profound observation.”

“Mr. Rignor, Ramous, we’re human. Only, we have more artificial components than other humans. Even though they grew us in labs, we have our personalities and beliefs, which makes us all human.”

He looked into her eyes as they teared up. There was a profound sadness in her demeanor.

She had to take a hard swallow to keep from breaking down. “The First Gens were born with a chemical defect which led to schizophrenic tendencies, with bouts of

paranoia. St. Paul refused to kill them and tried to resolve the problem with pharmaceuticals. That didn't work too well. Now, the First Gens call themselves the Order of God's judgment. Like them, I too sense we're God's judgment because of the murder of all those children."

"I'm clueless about God's judgment most of the time, but this makes sense. Except for the murder of my two friends, I might have just let this play out, let you do your job, Dania do hers, and go about my daily business. I'm an officer of the Law, which is a godly position. I have accepted it with all its complications. Someone has murdered two officers and friends of mine, and it's my obligation, my desire, to bring those who committed those crimes to justice. So, perhaps you and I are together tools of God's judgment. Now, are you going to untie me?"

"You will get out soon enough. I need to leave before you're missed. I and others will keep an eye on you, waiting for Dania to make an attempt on your life. Goodbye Ramous."

Zoe left through the back door.

Ramous didn't like being the bait and presumed they failed while using both Paul and John as bait. He

considered he would come to the same end, but was just too angry to let it bother him.

Then, he mused about how Zoe continued to describe her situation during the conversation. He figured she was not only trying to bring down Dania, but she was also revealing the painful reality of who or what she was. He understood in her way she was confiding in him.

That caused him to have feelings for her.

It took him fifteen minutes to untie the knots, and ten more to figure out what to do. He concluded he couldn't involve any more people in this investigation, fearing more of his friends might get killed.

He would keep his and Zoe's conversation to himself.

Once Ramous got out of the chair, after he gathered his thoughts, he called the Florence police station. He talked with Officer Meyer and gave him the coordinates to find Paul's body.

"I hope this is just bad information, Chief Rignor."

"Me too, Sam, thank you. Please hurry and contact me as soon as you find him?"

"Yes sir, we're on it."

Ramous knew they would find him. Zoe was too specific for it to turn out otherwise.

Ramous returned to the Tillamook station where he paused in front of Clair's desk, staring at her. She perceived why he was looking at her in such a way as the tears fell.

He walked around her desk as she stood, and he hugged her for a long time as she wept. Ramous was a strong man, but he almost broke down twice while holding her.

He held her until the phone rang with an officer on the other end, confirming they found the body of their friend Paul. They found him right where Ramous told them he would be.

There were four other officers in the station and they all gathered around, explaining their disbelief and sadness at the loss of Paul and John.

Ramous walked into his office as Clair and the rest of the officers followed him. He knew he couldn't disclose his conversation with Zoe.

No one said a word as they sat together in silence for what seemed like hours, until David, the Coroner, called telling Ramous he was on his way to collect Paul's body.

“I’m sorry, Ramous! We lost two good men. Catch these guys and bring them to justice, Ram!”

He didn’t even say goodbye. Ramous understood it upset David like everyone else.

Now, Clair was the only other person left with a dangerous amount of knowledge about this investigation.

Everyone returned to their desks, except Clair. She was still crying and unable to do her job at the moment.

“Clair, did you find any numbers for management at the St. Paul Corporation?”

“Yes, I did.”

She walked to her desk and came back and handed the numbers to Ramous.

Ramous looked at her. “I don’t want you involved with this case any longer. If anyone should ask you, you’re to refer them to me. It’s imperative you follow my instructions, Clair.”

“Can I ask why?”

“No, you can’t, and you can’t speak of this conversation to anybody either.”

“All right, Chief.”

Clair returned to her desk and sat for a long time with her head in her hands.

The following days, Ramous made funeral arrangements for Paul and helped with preparations for John.

Paul divorced within the last year. He didn't have children, and his ex-wife moved to Texas. Ramous didn't even bother to tell her.

John was married with two children in college. His family needed him to help with the funeral arrangements due to their emotional stress.

They buried both officers the same day, next to one another.

For Ramous, it was a sad day and a happy day at the same time.

He was confident Paul and John accepted Christ. He would miss them, but he believed they were in heaven, which is a much happier place than the earth.

John's wife Debbie talked with Ramous. She was heartbroken, but understood too why John was much happier where he's at.

There was a big dinner in their honor that evening. Hundreds of people came from all over the country.

The local church prepared the food and provided tables and seating. Several of John and Paul's family and friends got up to talk about them, as did Ramous.

The next day, Ramous purposed to follow his routine. He needed an ordinary day, although he spent most of it driving around reflecting on the loss of his friends.

That night he ate a late dinner by himself. Before he finished, a slight knock came at the back door. Ramous didn't recognize the knock until he heard the knock a second time. *It's too late for anyone to come by.*

It was 10 PM. Perhaps, an officer has come by and needed to talk.

Instead, it was the young woman, Zoe.

"What are you doing here? Is Dania here?"

"No, I'm alone."

Ramous was reluctant to invite her in. He wondered if he should leave her on the back deck. Was she going to tie him to the chair again?

"Please come in, Zoe."

She stepped inside the door and stood there until Ramous motioned for her to sit at a breakfast stool next to the kitchen counter. Out of a sense of caution, he walked around to the other side of the counter.

As she took a seat, she told Ramous she heard Dania returned to Seattle. It didn't appear he was on her hit list any longer.

“You are safe now, Chief. You're not as important of a target to them. Besides, the word is, they have determined killing you might bring too much publicity their way. Killing officers are one thing, but a Police Chief might be too newsworthy.”

Ramous was not concerned about his safety. He was still too mad about the murder of his friends and fellow officers. He believed he would find those responsible and bring them to justice, no matter where they go, but he kept quiet about that.

“You could have called and told me this.”

“Yes, I know, but I wanted to see you again.”

Zoe was beautiful with olive eyes and long dark flowing hair. His thoughts proved almost disturbing

considering what was going on. Ramous desired to put his arms around her. How frustrating.

She looked about ten years younger than he, and he was flattered by her comment, although he said nothing in response to it, being apprehensive and on guard.

Zoe told him the rest of the Second Gens were called back to Washington, but two Second Gens would stay behind for two weeks to make sure he remained safe.

She tried to convince him there was nothing more to worry about regarding his own safety, or anyone else on the coast, unless he made himself a nuisance to Dania's plan.

“It would be dangerous to continue investigating.”

Ramous perceived she was warning him to back off, but he had no intention of doing that under any circumstances.

Zoe got up to leave. “I hope this isn't the last time we meet, but I'm not sure what will happen from here on out. So, I guess I'll say goodbye and sorry for knocking you out and tying you up. I have been watching you for a while. You're a kind man, Ramous. It will be hard to leave. Goodbye.”

Ramous said goodbye as she left through the back door.

It made him anxious when Zoe told him that she and the other Second Gens were leaving.

The possibility of never seeing her again made him uneasy. He had not experienced the feelings he had for her in a long time.

Although he's only met her twice, there was something about her he couldn't resist or get out of his mind.

Resisting those kinds of feelings was Ramous' strong suit, but not this time. The best he could do was to concentrate on other matters, and not about her, but thinking about her was exactly what he did the rest of the night.

Bed-And-Breakfast

The next day Ramous received a letter that included a resume from a young woman by the name of Emily Callihan, from Ireland.

Two months earlier, Ramous put out feelers, advertisements, for a manager to run the bed-and-breakfast.

The hotel was becoming too big for him, and he decided to reopen it. It was always full and brought in upwards of seventy-five thousand dollars a month.

His mother and father were hotel managers for another family until that family sold their business and moved back to Europe.

When they did, they offered a six-acre plot of land on the beach, in Garibaldi, and another two acres in Manzanita, to his parents back in the fifties. That family, the Humbolts, sold it to them for one-tenth of what it was worth.

Since then, his parents built a sixteen-room bed-and-breakfast, a fifteen pad RV Park, and three other residences on the property in Garibaldi, of which two are sitting empty. The property in Manzanita is currently a vacant lot. His parents planned to build a resort there before they died.

Ramous decided he would move into one of the three-bedroom homes on the resort's property and hire a manager to reopen the bed-and-breakfast.

Steven, the son of the caretakers who worked for Ramous' parents, lived in the other three-bedroom house with his family on the property. He continued living there after his father died of a heart attack, and his mother moved into residential living in Tillamook.

He maintained and watched over the property to cover his rent. Steven owned a successful lawn care service, which kept him busy. Frequently, he said he would like to work for Ramous full time as his parents did.

The six acres took a lot of upkeep. One side of the property bordered the beach in which his parents built a stone wall the full length of the property. It had three locked gates that had to be monitored daily. Beach goers were constantly breaking the locks and coming onto the

property. Steven was always complaining about not being there to stop them and was purchasing at least a dozen pad locks per month. The rest of the property was manicured beautifully with lawns, gardens, and sitting areas throughout. That was the reason most beach goers trespassed onto the property.

The locks weren't that expensive, and Ramous didn't worry too much about it. His parents had left him a sizeable bank account to go with the property, but he never dipped into the money he inherited, except to buy locks and pay the twenty-five-thousand-dollar tax bill each year.

He figured it was time to reopen the hotel, and the letter from the young Irish woman was encouraging.

She was well qualified and managed a similar bed-and-breakfast on the Irish coast. Within fifteen minutes, he called her and offered to pay her way to the US so they could meet. After the phone conversation, he made up his mind right then she was perfect for the position. Ramous took the rest of the day off. The letter and his thoughts of reopening the bed-and-breakfast were good distractions from his current depression.

Just as his mind wandered off to moving into the three-bedroom, he received a call from Clair.

“Hi, Chief, how are you?”

“Better. Did I tell you that I’m considering reopening the bed-and-breakfast?”

“I think you mentioned it.”

“Well, I just received a letter and resume from a potential manager, and I intend to hire her to get it operating. What do you need?”

“That’s good news, Ram. Maybe, I’ll come stay for a couple days, leave the husband, kids, and grandkids at home. Speaking of, remember, Selena and Jake stayed there when they got married. That honeymoon suite is one of the best all along the coast. I miss your mom and dad. They were wonderful people.”

“Thanks, I miss them too. You called me for something?”

“Yes. I called to tell you O.H.S.U. called. Mr. Daniels is awake and responding; talking is what they said. He appears to be talking a lot, and they can’t shut him up.”

“Ah, oh, that’s not good. Give me the number, and I’ll call them. Clair, from now on, forward any calls regarding this investigation directly to my phone. Don’t answer questions or take any more messages, please.”

“Yes, Chief. I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking. Here is the number.”

She hung up without saying goodbye.

Ramous didn’t want to talk to her in such a way, but it was for her own safety. One day he might tell her why.

Ramous called O.H.S.U. immediately after Clair hung up.

“Hello, information. Can I help you?”

“Yes, this is Police Chief Rignor. I would like to speak to the head of your ICU.”

“One moment, please.”

“Hello, this is Dr. Bradshaw. How can I help you, Chief Rignor?”

“I would like to speak with Harry Wilson. I guess he has come to and is talking.”

“Oh yes, the talker. Chief Rignor, I’m required by his chart to ask you for a password before I can allow you to speak with him. I sent that password to the cell number I was given. Could you please text it to me for verification?”

Ramous received the number and sent it back to the doctor.

“Thank you, Chief. I’ll put you through to Mr. Wilson.”

“Thank you, Doctor.”

Peter Daniels answered, “Hello, Chief Rignor, the doctor told me you would like to speak with me. Is this about my friends Thomas Minor and Cindy Halstead?”

“I’m sorry, Mr. Daniels, I didn’t intend to talk about them. I’m calling to ask you to please keep quiet. Your life is in danger, and they have put you in O.H.S.U. under an assumed name. Can you keep those things to yourself until I can get in to talk to you personally?”

“Yes, I can, although I’m angry beyond words. St. Paul murdered my friends, and they need to be exposed. Please, Chief. Rignor! Will you find out who’s responsible?”

“Keeping you from joining them is all we can deal with at this moment. It’s imperative you do not speak to anyone about what has happened to you or why. I’ll be in tomorrow. Then we’ll talk about your friends. Please send me back to Doctor Bradshaw.”

“Hello, Chief. Let me give you an update on Mr. Wilson. Not only is he talking, but he’s also well enough to be discharged.”

“Oh! Wow! I can’t get there until tomorrow. Can you hold him until then?”

“No problem. We will hold him until you get here, Chief.”

“Thank you, Dr. Bradshaw. Have a good day. Goodbye.”

That evening, Ramous invited Steven and his family over for a BBQ. He and Steven discussed opening the bed-and-breakfast. He asked him if he was still interested in working for him full time.

Steven jumped at the idea, so did his wife. They agreed on conditions and a salary. He was ready to come to work once Ramous selected a manager.

The next day Ramous drove to [O.H.S.U.](#)

He pulled a chair next to Mr. Daniels’ bed and questioned him.

“Do you mind if I record this on video?”

“That’s fine. I’m not sure how long I was out, so my timeline might be skewed. However, I’ll give you the general details.”

“Why would someone try to kill you, Mr. Daniels?”

“This is why. My friend Thomas Minor met me at my house early one evening. He worked for the St. Paul Research Corporation. He told me that he and his co-worker, Jill Avery, found incriminating information about St. Paul, and because of what they found, he was afraid for his life.

“St. Paul already killed his co-worker Jill and her family the night before. He came to my home early one evening and gave me a briefcase he was carrying with him. The briefcase contained a bunch of papers and thumb drives, all of which contained disturbing information regarding research St. Paul was conducting. He had me empty the briefcase into another container, a box, and I was supposed to keep it hidden. Eventually, he left my house to find his girlfriend Cindy Halstead. That was the last time I saw him. Now, I don’t even recall what day it was. The next day the School District I work for received two strange phone calls. Two different people called asking about me.

“I got scared and ran to the beach. I was worried they might come looking for me. Once there, I rented a cabin on Netarts Bay under an assumed name of Jerry Reckless. I guess Netarts was the wrong place to go. Tom, Cindy and I used to go there several times a year. I should have known it would be the first place they’d look for me.

The first night in the cabin, I turned on the television. As I was thumbing through the channels, I came across a Portland news program. They were reporting on a single-car accident on Mount Hood. Two people were killed. It was Thomas and Cindy who died in the accident. So, I didn’t sleep at all that night, but passed out the next morning, being too tired to stay awake any longer. I woke in the afternoon. I was hungry, so I walked down the beach to a little grocery store and purchased a roast beef sandwich and a soda. Afterward, I went for a walk on the beach.

“That evening, I looked at the information Thomas had given me, which was a big mistake. I should have just contacted the media and given it to them.”

Peter explained what he read and saw in the paperwork and videos. He cringed while talking about them.

“The third day, I continued to pour over the files and videos. That evening, I got thirsty again, for something other than water or coffee, and went back to the little store. Next, I recall a beautiful young woman on the beach, and yesterday, I woke up here.”

Ramous turned off the video recorder.

“Would you mind writing all of this down for me, Mr. Daniels?”

“Sure, I don’t mind. Chief, am I safe? I’m smart enough to figure out if St. Paul got to Jill, Thomas, and Cindy to keep them quiet, then I’m certain they can find me.”

“Mr. Daniels, you’re listed under an alias, but it won’t be long before they figure this out. I want to move you to a safe location. I have a bed-and-breakfast on the coast just north of Tillamook, in Garibaldi. It’s empty at the moment, and I’m the only one living there. So, you can stay there until we’re sure you’re safe. We have all your personal items at the station in Tillamook. I can retrieve them and bring them over to the hotel. I’m sure I can protect you there. I believe it’s the safest thing for you right now.”

“After what has happened to my friends and what I saw on those videos, I don’t feel safe anywhere, although I’ll move in there for the time being.”

O.H.S.U. discharged Peter that afternoon, and he and Ramous left for the coast. On the way, Ramous warned Peter not to talk with anyone else about the investigation. He explained the death of his fellow officers because they saw the video, and how it was left in the blue-ray.

Ramous told Peter about the two different generations, called Gens and how one group, the Second Gens, were trying to stop the others, the First Gens.

He explained why Zoe, a Second Gen, broke his neck to save him. He told him she and others were watching the bed-and-breakfast for the next couple of weeks in case any First Gens came snooping around. That knowledge helped Peter feel safer, but not much.

They got to the bed-and-breakfast later in the afternoon. Ramous showed Peter to a guest room and then went into the station to retrieve his personal items. He snuck them out of the office so no one would ask questions or find out Mr. Daniels was staying at the hotel.

The next morning, Emily came into town for the manager's interview. Ramous paid for a taxi to bring her from the Portland Airport into the Tillamook Police Station. She arrived at 11 AM.

Emily was a beautiful thirty-four-year-old Irish woman with dark red hair and bright green eyes. They glowed when she smiled. She stood five feet eight. She wore jeans and a sweatshirt, which was too warm for the hot weather. She was attractive.

Ramous drove her over to the resort and offered her the second guest room. She was tired, jet-lagged, and took a nap, lasting into the early evening. Ramous waited for her to wake up so he could interview her. He didn't expect her to be so tired.

He planned for the interview to last three or four hours, so he could show her around and go over her ideas for the bed-and-breakfast. In her resume, she included the fact that she started two successful bed-and-breakfasts in the past.

Emily made her way into the kitchen from her late afternoon nap.

“Well, good evening, Emily.”

“Good evening, Sir.”

“Call me Ram. I get ‘Sir’ enough at work.”

“Okay, Ram, Sir.” She smiled.

“Would you like something to drink, or eat perhaps?”

“I’m thirsty, but I’m not hungry. Coffee would be great to help me wake up. The trip was longer than I had hoped, and tiring. I’m sorry.”

“That’s not a problem. We have plenty of time for the interview. Is this your first time in the US?”

“No, I spent two weeks in New York three years ago. I attended a hotel convention downtown. I didn’t care for New York, and it almost caused me not to respond to your advertisement. Since then, I have seen pictures of the Oregon coast and fell in love with Canon Beach, especially the big rock on the surf. I decided I would like to visit. Now, I guess, I hope to move here, depending on whether you hire me. At least I get to visit.”

“Do you have any family who will join you should you stay?”

“No, I’m alone. I was adopted and my adopted parents disowned me because I became a Christian, and

they remained Catholic. They don't have other children, so they raised me an only child, and I act like an only child too." She laughed.

"The fact you were looking for a Christian couple or other is one of the main reasons I applied. Now, I have two questions for you. I noticed you have little in the way of furniture. How do you expect to run a resort without furniture? Also, what's the name of this bed-and-breakfast? You never mentioned a name."

"It doesn't have a name yet. One of your goals will be to name the hotel. We used to call it the Beach Haven, but I never liked the name. It sounded too cultish for me. So, choose a new name. As far as needing furniture, it will be your goal to furnish the place. I sold the old furniture because it was outdated, and I hated it. I would like a different theme for each room. Your resume stated you did so with the Ireland Manor. I would like you to do the same here."

"Does that mean I'm hired?"

"Yes, if you want it. I decided after our phone conversation and your resume that you're the perfect fit for the place. Are you prepared to stay, or do you need time to return to Ireland and settle things?"

“I came prepared to stay, although I might appear a vagabond or gypsy.”

“You don’t, and I’m happy you can stay. We can open sooner. Do you drive?”

“Yes, I do, but on the correct side of the road. I’ll need to get used to American roads and driving on the wrong side.”

“First thing, we need to get you a car. I have a truck you can drive in the meantime, so you can take the next couple of days learning your way around the neighborhood. I’ll get you a cell, just in case you get lost. Your first assignment will be to give the hotel a new name.”

“Okay, I can do that.”

“These are the things I need you to accomplish right-a-way. Give the bed-and-breakfast a name, buy furniture and hire two staff for room maintenance, two desk clerks, two chefs, and a part-time line cook for night room service. I would hope to keep payroll for those positions around twenty thousand per month. So, total payroll, including you and my maintenance guy, should come to around thirty-five thousand a month. On average, the bed-and-breakfast brings in seventy-five thousand a month. The

hotel has over three million invested with different banks, and it's available to get us back in business.”

Ramous opened a cupboard, reached in, and pulled a panel back. Behind the panel was a safe.

“The combination of this safe is ‘01955’.”

He opened it and pulled a credit card from inside and handed it to Emily.

“This card has a five-hundred-thousand-dollar limit. Use it to make whatever purchases you need to get this place running. Also, there's a new car lot in Tillamook. Go buy yourself a car, but put it under the hotel's name, after you've chosen a name for it. So, now get those requests done.”

“Mr. Rignor.”

Ramous cut her off.

“As you know, my name is Ramous. Please call me Ram. That's what my friends call me, and I prefer Ram to Mr. Rignor, or Sir, okay?”

“Okay, Ram. Why aren't you running the resort yourself?”

“I love what I do, and I can't help myself. The money doesn't mean much, but being a police officer does.

I'm only opening the hotel because it would be a shame not to. I don't want too much responsibility regarding the operation, which is why I hired you. Just make a profit of ten thousand monthly, and everything will be fine. I'm confident the hotel will exceed that. If it does, it will make for hefty bonuses come December. You run the hotel and I'll remain the Police Chief, and we will get along."

Ramous found it refreshing she was honest and confident, unafraid to say what was on her mind.

"Are you trying to talk yourself out of a job? Being a police officer isn't my living, it's my life, and I couldn't live any other way."

"No, I wasn't trying to talk you or myself out of a job. I'm excited about working here, and I'm sorry, I didn't mean to be rude."

"No worries, I like people who can speak their mind. I'm not offended at all."

"Ok. Now, you mentioned living quarters."

"There are three residences outside the bed-and-breakfast. I'll live in one, and I assume you will take the other. Steven, the caretaker and his family live in the third one. The property you'll be staying in is a large two

bedroom with a fenced-in yard and gardens. Steven will provide yard service for you unless you care to keep it maintained yourself.”

“Okay. I need to pinch myself to see if I’m dreaming.”

“You’re not dreaming. Take the next couple of days and get yourself situated.”

“Ram, tell me about Steven. Who is he?”

“Steven is the maintenance man for the property, but he only answers to me. If you have a problem with him, tell me, and I’ll handle it. He will follow your instructions otherwise. I’ll see to it.”

Ramous already liked Emily.

“One last issue, a man is staying in room 6. He’s part of an investigation. If he talks about the investigation, you’re to ask him to stop. Do not ask him anything about why he’s here. He shouldn’t be here too long, and I want the two of you to stay as far from one another as possible. He’s a witness I’m concealing and the less you know about him the better.”

“Yes, Sir.”

After giving her an annoyed look, Ramous supplied Emily with names of previous employees and several hotel catalogs in which to buy supplies and furniture. They agreed to open the bed-and-breakfast within two months.

Many of the visitors who stayed there before would more than likely come back. It was one of the more gorgeous properties in the area and was always in demand.

The hotel rarely had an empty room.

He and Emily reviewed the books and bank accounts, which Ramous determined he would control for the time being. They agreed on a lucrative salary, but she had a big job ahead of her.

Emily would be a good fit. It was a good day for them both.

Michael Davies

Ramous wished he had someone he could rely on. It would have been nice to talk things over with someone other than himself, and to his chagrin, this investigation was becoming a regular conversation. He worried about the rest of his officers, and Clair in particular. He knew her long and well enough to know it would be hard for her not to get involved, and became frustrated at her for her constant meddling.

The next morning, he got up and walked into the hotel to the smell of coffee and eggs. Emily was in the kitchen making breakfast.

She offered him eggs, but he wanted to get busy and rushed out the door with coffee in hand.

Once he arrived at the office, he pulled out the numbers Clair gave him for two managers by the names of Mike Davies, and Jake Houser, with the St Paul Research Corporation.

He called the first, “Hello, Mr. Davies’ office, can I help you?”

“Yes, you can. This is Chief Rignor from the Tillamook police department, and I would like to speak with Mr. Davies, if he’s in.”

“One moment, please.”

“Hello, this is Mike Davies. What can I do for you, Chief?”

“Mr. Davies, I would like to meet with you. Is there a convenient time we can meet?”

“I assume this is about, and I don’t want to say this too loudly, so I’m not overheard, the Angel Project?”

Then his voice changed to a whisper. “I shouldn’t even be talking to you. This is my secure line. Otherwise, I would have to play dumb. Today is Tuesday. I’m not free until Thursday afternoon at the office. I could meet you after 5:30 outside of the office. If not, will Thursday work for you?”

“Yes, I guess Thursday will work.”

“Chief, please listen, I’ll put you down as a vendor for electronic equipment. I’m the department head for purchasing and it would be within the course of my

position to meet with such a person. When you come in, register at the front desk as Larry Henderson, from Intelligent Design. Is that all right for you?"

"Yes. I would have liked to speak to you before then, but I understand. Do you know Jake Houser? I need to talk to him too."

"Chief, you were fortunate to get me. I worry about the Angel Project and its effect on the world, but Jake Houser is part of the leadership of the project and I wouldn't interview in the same room with him. I couldn't speak freely with him in the room."

"Okay, I'll set up another time with him. I'll see you on Thursday. How about 1 PM?"

"Yes, see you Thursday, goodbye."

"Goodbye, Mr. Davies."

Ramous was relieved to find a manager from St Paul willing to talk to him. He was concerned about calling Jake Houser right away in case it tipped him off about his call to Mr. Davies. He would wait until after the meeting to call him.

Just then, his cell rang.

"Hello, Chief Rignor, this is Zoe."

“Hello, Zoe. What can I do for you?”

“I heard you put a call into Mike Davies. You have put him in danger. I’m sure Dania is monitoring your calls. Now, I’m forced to assign resources to protect him. What were you thinking?”

“I wasn’t thinking anything, and I’m doing my job investigating the homicide of two officers, and friends of mine.”

“I warned you not to get involved. You will get more people killed.”

“Listen, if you can protect Davies, do so! But, if you hinder my investigation, I’ll come after you too! I didn’t start this, but I’m determined to finish it, if for no other reason, for the sake of my friends.”

“You’re determined, aren’t you?”

“Yes!”

“Well, let’s not work against each other. If you will not back off, it would be best you work with us, although you have forced me, with limited resources, to put a protective team on Mike Davies.”

“I’m sorry for that, but it’s not my problem. I’m determined to see this through and bring those responsible to justice, and I can’t accept anything else.”

“Chief Rignor, we Second Gens are more intelligent than First Gens. First Gens often by nature act impulsively rather than with a purpose, so it’s not too hard catching them when they get impulsive, but when they’re hiding, it’s hard to catch or find them. They will come after Mr. Davies. We will try to keep him safe, but please be careful with your calls. Consider they’re being monitored. From now on, please contact no one until after your meeting with Mike Davies. Afterward, I want to meet with you myself so we can determine a course of action. I have a secure cellphone I’ll give you when we meet, and I need you to use the phone to make any contacts about this issue. Goodbye.” She hung up before Ramous could respond.

Ramous spent the rest of the day going over the station’s work roster. He had the hard and dirty work of finding a replacement for Paul. So, he spent the time going over evaluations and timesheets of the rest of the police staff and some time putting an ad online.

Ramous got home at 6:30 PM to find Emily sitting in the kitchen at the big island with paperwork and catalogs spread out from one end of the counter to the other.

As he entered the kitchen, he said, “Hello, Emily. How was your day?”

“Hi, Ram, I’ve had a great day, thank you. I’ve spent most of it selecting the furniture for the bedrooms, the sitting, and dining room. Also, I have chosen a name to replace the general term bed-and-breakfast.”

“Okay, what name did you pick?”

“Serenity Inn.”

“I don’t like that.”

“Just kidding, I want to call it The Beach Comber. The last business to use the name has closed because of retirement. No one from Astoria to New Port is using it.”

“That name should work. We can try that.”

“Now, so far, the furniture I want to buy comes to about one hundred sixty-five thousand dollars. It’s not the cheapest I could find, but it’s perfect for a beach setting.”

Ramous looked over the furniture and was impressed by her style choices, and he agreed with her on every selection.

“Have you seen Mr. Daniels today?”

“Yes, he passed through on his way to the beach. Then, returned to his room and I haven’t seen him since.”

Ramous went upstairs and knocked on Peter’s door. “You in there, Peter?”

“Yeah, come in.”

Once Ramous entered, Peter said, “I was watching the news to see if anyone else had a tragic run-in with the St. Paul Corporation, but all seems quiet on the front.”

“Mr. Daniels, I called a manager with St. Paul today. He isn’t too thrilled with them either. We plan to meet in Portland, tomorrow.”

Ramous spent the next hour talking with Peter. He and Peter were the same age and had several things in common. Ramous thought to himself they would be friends under other circumstances.

Ramous asked, “Are you a Christian, Daniel?”

“No, I have several Christian friends, but never made the plunge myself. I must admit, I’ve called on God more than a few times over the last couple weeks, but I’m not.”

Ramous considered God might have put Peter in this position to call on him. It appeared Peter was being directed along that road.

Peter turned out to be an exceptionally intelligent man. So, Ramous confided in him regarding the investigation, mostly because there was no one else to talk with. Also, many of the deductions Peter introduced made perfect sense. Ramous assumed he might make a decent detective, too.

When Ramous commented, Peter said he had been a business manager long enough to make reasonable conclusions on many things. It has always been second nature for him. He was upbeat until Ramous mentioned his friends. They both had that in common, and it was causing a bond between them.

Later in the evening, they took a walk on the beach. Peter told Ramous about his friends and work. It was dark when they got back to the Beach Comber.

They returned to find Emily had prepared dinner for them.

“Wait a minute, Emily; I thought you applied for the Manager position, not the Chef.”

She was a superb chef and learned to cook while managing hotels in Ireland.

“I can wear many hats if needed. You should taste my lasagna.”

Then, Ramous said, “Since the three of us are in the same room, I need to say something. Peter, you’re not to speak of this investigation with Emily. I made the same plea to Emily. It’s for your safety and the success of this investigation. Do you understand?”

“Yes, Ramous, I already figured that out. Mum is the word. So, Emily, do you play tennis?”

“I play tennis, and I’m a fantastic player.”

“I noticed a tennis court at the north end of the property should you be ready for a challenge.”

Both looked at Ramous to see what he might say. Ramous knew they were teasing him.

“Hey, don’t look at me, guys. I haven’t played tennis since I was a kid, go for it, and don’t forget, Peter, the importance of what I said.”

“Right, and I get it.”

On Thursday, Ramous drove into Portland to meet with Mike Davies. Mike's office was in the Lloyd building on NE Multnomah Street.

Ramous got into town early, so he stopped at the Lloyd Center food court and ordered a hamburger and fries.

While he was eating, a heavy-set man took the seat across the table.

“Can I help you, Sir?”

“Hello Chief, I'm Mike Davies. When you entered the food court, Zoe called me and told me what you looked like and where to find you. It's better to meet here than my office, believe me.”

“How did she do that?”

“Cameras, The Second Gens keep track of the surveillance cameras surrounding the St. Paul offices across the street. They are keeping an eye out in case any First Gens want to visit us. She disrupted the cameras, observing this area of the food court so we can talk unmolested. They are exceptionally gifted.”

“I guess. Mr. Davies, I'm investigating the murders of eight people, two of whom were officers and friends of mine. I understand St. Paul and the First Gens were

responsible for those deaths. Where can I find the person Dania?"

"I don't know where she is, no one does. St. Paul is looking for her and another one hundred forty-two First Gens on the run. They've already killed several people. I'm sorry, Chief Rignor, that you lost your friends. I also lost friends. Thomas Minor and Jill Avery were colleagues and good friends of mine."

Davies got up and ordered a cup of coffee.

He returned and took a hard look at Ramous and said, "I blame their deaths on The Angel Project. Other than me mentioning it, you have heard of the Angel Project, right?"

"I haven't heard or found out much of anything regarding the Angel Project."

Ramous didn't want to reveal he had the files taken by Thomas Minor.

"Chief, the Angel Project is a dangerous experiment being conducted by St. Paul. They've been working on it for almost forty years. It's an unethical and dangerous program. I've been involved with it for about a decade and have learned enough to know if we don't stop it soon, many

more people, perhaps more of our friends will die. I don't know who I can trust."

"I don't know enough to comment on it, but I would like to be kept informed about what anyone, even St. Paul, is doing to reel this problem in?"

"Mr. Rignor, we sent out the Second Gens to track them. The First Gens are intelligent beings. Einstein would seem like a child to them, but they have a flaw created from a chemical imbalance during their early growth that caused them to be schizophrenic, including bouts of paranoia. Because of that, they often act out in distinct ways, making them stand out in public places. When that happens, we can come in and remove them. So far, we've captured ten of them because of one bizarre action or another. Now, they have developed this insane idea that all of this was their maternal parent's fault."

"Was it?"

"Honestly, I don't know, but once they learned we had a list which included the names of the women who aborted them, they decided to kill them all. If they get that list, I assume several hundred people will die thereafter, and there would be nothing we could do to prevent it either,

other than putting the Second Gens on their trail and hope they stop them.”

“It doesn’t sound like they’re having much success. Thus far, Minor, Halstead, and two of my officers, my friends are dead. You’re telling me that they died for a list?”

“Those women on that list will die as well, if we don’t find it. I’m pretty certain Thomas Minor and Jill Avery stole that list from our Portland labs before they were murdered. Minor passed the list, along with a batch of other important files, to a man named Peter Daniels. Daniels went on the run. Zoe, under my orders, followed him to the coast with intentions to retrieve the list and the other files. I don’t know why, but against better judgment, Zoe killed him and took whatever information he had. I guess that’s where you come in, Chief.”

It surprised Ramous that Davies wasn’t aware Daniels was alive and wondered why Zoe didn’t tell him. Why wasn’t he suggesting that Zoe turn herself in for murder?

“Why haven’t you turned Zoe in for the murder of Daniels? Why are you letting her run around, and what if she kills someone else?”

“I know Zoe quite well. Until I know better, I have to assume that she killed him because she had to. It’s out of character that she would murder an innocent person. There was something else going on there that she isn’t telling me, or anyone for that matter.”

Ramous didn’t think it was wise to let Davies know that Daniels was still alive. This could all be a set up. He only said something to keep Davies from becoming suspicious regarding what he was about to tell him.

“After meeting her, I believe that too. Right now, I have no plans of bringing her in, but I better not hear of any more bodies where she’s concerned. By-the-way, she told me about the list. She also told me it wouldn’t stop there, and that the First Gens hated humanity and planned to wipe out all humankind. I find that hard to believe. It’s insane!”

“Yes, we believe that’s their plan and makes them more unpredictable. Fortunately, the Second Gens are more advanced than the First and outnumber them. There are one hundred fifty-three First Gens and two hundred sixty Second Gens. Just by Simple mathematics, the Second Gens will eventually eliminate the First Gens. The problem is, will they kill ten more people or a hundred thousand more people before they’re stopped? It’s hard to say.”

Ramous said, “That’s concerning.”

Mike went on, “I know. Further, St. Paul is trying to keep this quiet and would have no problem ending my existence if they should catch me giving out this information. That’s how bad it has become. You were fortunate to get me on the phone first. Anyone else and you’d be dead by now. Personally, I’m having a hard time deciding who is worse, the First Gens or St. Paul itself. The Angel Project should have never happened. It’s morally wrong on every level. If the proper authorities found out, they would put St. Paul Research Corporation out of business, at least stop the project. It could turn into the biggest financial failure in American History. Many in top management would do anything and everything they could to prevent that from happening, including doing away with us.”

Ramous took a drink of his soda, while he looked around the mall. He wondered whether he would see anyone who seemed out of place. Perhaps someone acting strange, wearing a suit. Almost everyone was wearing a suit. He was in a business section of Portland, why wouldn’t they be?

“You need to tread lightly, Chief. Let Zoe and me be your contacts. I’ll get to you whatever information you need, through Zoe. Let’s use her as our go-between. She knows what St. Paul is, and she isn’t their friend, but she needs to stop the First Gens and then deal with St. Paul afterward. We will bring them to justice, Mr. Rignor. Companies like St. Paul should not exist in a civilized society.”

“Mr. Davies, right now, I’m most concerned with finding justice for my officers and friends. So, if you involve me in apprehending Dania, I’d appreciate it. The rest is less important and bigger than my abilities. That doesn’t mean I won’t get involved. I’m just concentrating on one thing at a time.”

“Okay, Chief. I understand, but please don’t stop there. We need you. We can’t rely on too many people, for their safety and ours. I need to get back. Zoe will bring you more information tomorrow. She will come to you. Where would be a good place to meet?”

“She has already met me at my bed-and-breakfast, tell her to call me beforehand, and we can meet there.”

“Okay, I will, and goodbye. I’ll be in contact.”

“All right, Mr. Davies. Goodbye.”

Ramous thought about what he was getting himself into all the way back to the coast. He already decided to find Paul and John's killer, or killers, but the rest of it was almost too big to comprehend.

He measured the pros and cons, and how complicated it would become. Also, he considered how dangerous and how much time it would take. He wanted no one else to get hurt.

You Mean I'm Dead?

As Ramous drove through Tillamook, he thought about how he enjoyed being a small-town cop. Most days, he went to work at the same time in the morning and came home at the same time every evening. Other than the occasional emergency that came up while off duty, his life was routine.

Now, he was reopening the bed-and-breakfast which would take his time, and despite Davies' encouragement, he wasn't sure if he should get involved in such an elaborate conspiracy.

After he got home, he and Peter took a walk on the beach. Ramous filled Peter in on as much as he was confident telling him. Peter wanted to help, but it was unclear how he could. Ramous told him he was not looking for his help, but he just needed someone to talk with. Peter had good insight, and because of that, Ramous revealed

more information to him than anyone else outside of law enforcement.

Ramous had a rough night's sleep that night. His dreams were full of violence. One that disturbed him was one where Zoe died in a firefight. He went crazy and killed everyone on both sides of the battle. He woke up full of rage. Although it was only a dream, he tore his pillow into pieces.

The next morning, he stopped in the hotel's kitchen on his way out. He grabbed a cup of coffee, kissed Emily on the forehead, and left for the office, which was odd, but she understood it meant nothing.

She was already up and going over catalogs to furnish the bed-and-breakfast. Peter walked in just as she finished ordering furniture. He bent over to review her spreadsheets.

“Wow, that's a lot of furniture on your list.”

“That's not all. I still need to order the entryway and library furniture. After that, I'll order bath supplies, towels, sheets, blankets, and more. I'm trying to stay below two hundred thousand, but it will be tight.”

He pointed to her figures and said, “Your total is off by thirty-six thousand. You transposed the fourth number on your list of rooms. Instead of fifteen thousand, you put fifty-one thousand, a thirty-six-thousand-dollar difference.”

“You’re right. I created it at 4:30 this morning. I guess my eyes were tired. Hey, would you review the rest of my numbers and make sure I’m not off elsewhere? That thirty-six thousand will make a big difference in how I proceed. I have always had a bookkeeper working for me, and I’ve always been able to figure the books out, but I’m more a manager than an accountant.”

“Sure, I’d be happy to.”

Peter and Emily spent the rest of the morning into the afternoon flirting and going over her numbers. During that time, both sensed an attraction towards one another.

Peter thought Emily was beautiful and captivated by her strong Irish accent. Emily found Peter handsome and intelligent. She was definitely attracted to him.

They went to lunch late that afternoon in town and ran into Ramous at a local chowder house. Ramous sat next to Emily at the table. He looked at Peter and said, “What are you guys doing?”

Peter sensed Ramous was not too happy with him. “We spent the morning going over the startup numbers for the Beach Comber and came to town to get lunch. Accounting is hard work.” He looked at Emily, smiling.

“Couldn’t you have made lunch at the hotel?”

Emily answered, “Are you going to confine me to the Hotel? Is that what the position requires?”

“No. I didn’t mean it that way. You’re free to come and go as you please. You’re in charge.”

Ramous was even more upset, because Peter and Emily seemed to be in the early stages of a budding relationship. He decided he needed to talk with Peter again, and explain to him, with prejudice, not to get involved with Emily for her safety.

Peter knew what was coming, but his attraction for Emily couldn’t be deterred. Besides, the distraction was important to him. She helped take his mind off the death of his friends.

Ramous left them to finish their lunch and went back to the station. He felt awful for the looks he gave Peter. Who was he to interfere should they have a

relationship? They are adults, and able to make their own decisions. Ramous figured Peter understood the facts and hoped he considered the consequences. Besides, being a Christian, what right did he have to get between God and love? It's hard to find good relationships in this world.

Peter and Emily returned to the Beach Comber. Their conversation on the way back to the hotel was superficial. Neither one could ignore the wall set up by Ramous. So, through small talk, each tested the strength of that wall they were attempting to scale, whether it was worth it.

When they got back to the hotel, Emily said she had cleaning to do in her room, so Peter poured a glass of tea and walked out to sit on the back deck. While sitting there contemplating drinking his tea, he heard a cell ringing. Under the chair next to him was a cell phone someone left behind. He assumed it must have been Ramous'. Thinking it might be important, he answered.

“Hello.”

“Hello, is this Chief Ramous' number?” Zoe asked.

“Yes, he left his cell, can I help you?”

“Is he there? I called his office, and they said he left for home.”

“No, he’s not here yet. This morning, he said he was stopping by the grocery on the way home.”

“Okay. Who is this?”

“I’m just a visitor, a tourist staying here at the bed-and-breakfast.”

“Is this Peter Daniels?”

“No, I’m sorry it’s not.”

“I know by your reply this is Peter Daniels. Please don’t hang up! I’m a friend. My name is Zoe. First, I want to apologize for breaking your neck. If I hadn’t intercepted you on the beach, you would be dead. I need to come and speak with both Chief Rignor and yourself this evening, if possible. Tell Ramous I’ll come by at 10 PM, at the north gate. Again, I’m sorry for injuring you, and even more so this involves you at all. Goodbye.”

After she hung up, Peter could hardly breathe as he was overcome with fear and negative emotions. His emotions were uncontrollable, regarding the hospital, and the pain of losing his friends all over again.

He got up and went into the kitchen where Ramous and Emily were putting away groceries.

“Ramous, can I talk with you outside, please?”

Once outside, he told Ramous about the call. Ramous forgot his cellphone on the deck. He carried two, one for work and one for personal use. It was his personal cellphone on which he received the call.

It surprised Ramous that Zoe revealed herself to Peter. Even though he provided Peter with important information, he should have kept to himself, he did not fill him in on everything. Peter wasn't a proper authority he should tell him everything. He wasn't sure why Zoe included him. If Zoe hadn't revealed herself to him, there'd be no way he would allow Peter to meet with her that evening.

The call caused him more concerned for Emily, so he had another conversation with Peter.

“Peter, I'm not one to stand in the way of true love. God is the only one who has that right, but I want you to understand the danger you might put Emily in by getting involved with her.”

“Ramous, I’m aware and cautious. I’m attracted to her and certain she feels the same way about me.”

“I can see that, and I’m warning you not to make it public until this is over, for both your sakes.”

“Got it, I’d walk away should I sense she was in any danger.”

“I figured you would. Again, Peter, have you considered your position on life and God? Personally, I have been a Christian most of my life. I became one when I realized how much I needed Him in my life. It changed everything about me. We all need him, Peter.”

“I can tell you when Thomas and Cindy were murdered, I called on God many times, but he didn’t respond. I’m not ready to make such a commitment or that kind of change in my life, even though it has certainly been on my mind.”

“Emily is a devout Christian. I hope you consider her feelings. Peter, becoming a Christian is an easy thing to do.”

Peter cut Ramous off before he could say any more.

“I’m hungry, Ram, how about you?”

Ramous wouldn't force the issue, but would wait and bring it up at another time.

After dinner and later that evening, Peter and Ramous walked to and stood just outside the north gate to the beach. At 10 PM sharp, a ghostly figure came walking along the beach. The moon was full. It was only bright enough for a person to move around in its light. When Peter saw her, he recognized her and took a step back.

“Hello, Chief Rignor and Peter Daniels.”

Ramous said, “Hi, Zoe. Why are we meeting?”

“Mike Davies asked me to give you this information. Also, there have been developments.”

She looked at Peter as she handed Ramous a large envelope. “Again, I'm sorry, Peter Daniels, for breaking your neck, but I did so in such a way as not to leave any permanent damage.”

“I spent over a week in the hospital.”

“Again, I'm sorry. Gentlemen, the First Gens moved back into Washington. They set up camp outside of Seattle. They found out several of the mothers are from the Seattle area. Once they figure out who is on that list, I'm afraid they will murder many of them. They found one

young married woman in Seattle with a child. They killed her and her family two nights ago. I won't go into details, but it was disturbing. Now, that the First Gens have left Oregon, I can say with a certain amount of confidence they will not come back any time soon. A Second Gen team caught three First Gens in Vancouver. The team killed two and captured the third one. We found out from the one captured what their plans are and where they were hiding. They moved before we got there, but we're close on their trail. Chief Rignor, again, I ask you to back off and let us finish this. The Second Gens are more than capable of bringing the First Gens to justice."

"Zoe, I will not back off."

"Okay. Anyway, the files, Dania doesn't care about those files. She only wants the list. Peter, Thomas Minor, did not understand what he took, and there are still hundreds of files missing that he took. So, if you can think of anyone else he might have given those files to, or where he hid them, that would be helpful."

Afterward, she said nothing more and left.

Peter and Ramos walked back to the bed-and-breakfast quietly.

Ramous put the envelope on his desk in his office and went for a walk on the beach by himself.

While walking, he heard a faint sound of a woman crying. He walked until he was next to it.

Glancing up into the tall sea grass, he saw Zoe sitting there with her head placed against her knees, and her hands mingled in her hair.

“Zoe? Is that you?”

She didn’t answer.

He asked again, “Zoe, are you okay?”

She lifted her head. “Ramous, what are you doing here?”

“I was taking a walk on the beach. Since the moon was full, I thought it would be a nice night for a walk. I often do that when the moon is full. Why are you sitting here, crying?”

He saw the tears were streaming down her face, and her eyes were like gems reflecting the dim moonlight.

“I’m sad, Ramous, because life isn’t fair. I’m an abomination, and hate myself sometimes!”

What she said took Ramous back. She always appeared to be so confident.

“Chief, there’s nothing I want more than to live a normal life, to marry, have children, and die of old age with someone special, but I can never live such a life.”

Ramous didn’t understand a Gen had such feelings. He never thought of her as a human being until now.

“I’m sorry, Zoe. I had no clue how you might view life.”

“It’s not your fault. I blame St. Paul; it’s their fault. They stole the lives of hundreds of human beings and made them into monsters, unwanted by human standards. It’s so painful knowing how our mothers and fathers didn’t want us. They drilled that into our heads, hoping to make us cold-hearted towards others, but it never worked for me. As hard as I may appear on the outside, I’m living with a broken heart inside.”

“I’m Sorry, Zoe.”

She lifted her head until their eyes met. “A few of the second Gens found out who their birth parents were. Several followed their families around from a distance to

see what they were like. I never found out who my family was.”

She explained how St. Paul trained the Second Gens for espionage. “The US government contracted St. Paul to send us into foreign countries as spies. They taught us to be cold-hearted and fearless in performing those operations, and we were exceptional at it. I speak thirty-five languages and have been a logistics officer in over two hundred operations.”

Ramous already noticed how beautiful she was, but her feelings and emotions surprised him. He found them equal to her physical beauty.

“Zoe, if it makes any difference, I think you’re a beautiful woman and thought so the first time I saw you. Now, and I understand you’re no less human than I am. Again, I’m sorry you feel so badly.”

“Thank you, Ramous. Want to go on a date?”
She laughed.

“Sure, I would like that.” He didn’t laugh.

Ramous gathered wood and built a small fire.
They sat near it talking for several hours.

She spoke about her beginnings and what went wrong with the First Gens. Ramous told his life story and how he ended up back in Tillamook.

She slid over next to Ramous. He put his arm around her, and when the talking ended, they sat next to the fire staring out onto the moonlit ocean.

At around 5 AM, Zoe got up, walked back over to the tall grass where she set upright a motorcycle. “Ramous, I need to go back to Portland and meet with Davies. I’ll get in contact with you soon.”

She put on a helmet, turned and said, “No one has ever held me like that before.”

She smiled at him and took off down the beach. He watched until she was out of sight.

Ramous returned to the hotel and took a seat at the island in the kitchen for a morning cup of coffee. Five minutes later Peter walked in and poured himself a cup and sat next to him.

Peter said, “I know where the information is, the stuff Zoe was talking about.”

“Where?”

“I had forgotten Tom told me there were more files and said he would get them to me. I believe he sent them to my work. He has sent me packages there before. I’m sure he did.”

“That’s a problem. They think you’re dead.”

“Well, that’s a problem! It would have been nice to know I was dead before now!”

“I’m sorry, I forgot to mention it. You didn’t try calling your office, did you?”

“You said I couldn’t, so no, I didn’t call them. What were they told?”

“They were led to believe you disappeared under a sneaker wave and we haven’t recovered you yet.”

“Oh, great! How am I going to go back to work when this is over?”

“Let’s cross that bridge when we get there, okay?”

“That’s easy for you to say. You’ve ruined my life!”

“Let’s just be happy you aren’t dead. Everything will work out. I promise. No one’s had a funeral for you yet, so you’re still just missing at this point. Who knows, we could find you hanging on to a piece of driftwood,

somewhere close to Hawaii, Alaska, or maybe California. At some point we will find you somewhere.”

“Thanks! What did I eat while I was floating on that piece of driftwood out in the ocean? Should we tell them, I was hanging on to a picnic basket full of fried chicken and potato salad, and I put on three pounds while drifting?”

“Don’t worry. We’ll come up with something.”

“Okay, Chief!”

Peter took a long sip of his coffee, staring at Ramous the whole time.

Then, Ramous said, “Give me the number to your office and I’ll call now.”

Peter gave him the number, and the Chief called into Peter’s office.

“Hello Centennial School District, how can I direct your call?”

“Hello, this is Chief Rignor from the Tillamook Police Department.”

Before he said anything else, the woman interrupted, “Did they find Peter?”

“No Mam, they didn’t find him. I’m calling about another issue and hope you can direct me to the answer.”

“All right, what can I do for you, Chief Rignor?”

“I’m looking for a package sent to Mr. Daniels, perhaps a month ago. Did you receive a package for him, or could you refer me to the person who collects your mail?”

“Yes, I received a small box for Peter about a month ago, as you suggested. There was no return address, and the package is still in the back, in the file room.”

Peter interrupted, “Tell her to put the package in the vault. That would be the best place.”

“Could you please secure the package until I can come and pick it up? Do you have a vault in your office?”

“Yes, I can put it in the vault. When will you be in?”

“I should be in this afternoon. Until then, I would like it put someplace safe. Please keep this to yourself as the package is pertinent to the investigation of Mr. Daniels’ disappearance. I can’t say any more. I’ll come in, and the first thing I’ll do is show my identification. Please take the identification and verify who I’m before you hand me the package. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I do. What does the package have to do with a sneaker wave?”

“I will explain at a later date, but it does, and let’s leave it at that, please.”

“All right, Chief Rignor.”

“Don’t give the package to anyone who does not follow that procedure. If anyone asks for it without following the procedure, please tell them you’re unaware of any such package. Can you do that?”

“I will, Chief. Anything else?”

“No. Thank you for your help. I’ll see you this afternoon. Goodbye, Miss.”

“Grace Holmes, my name is Grace Holmes. I’ll see you this afternoon, Chief Rignor.”

After he hung up, Peter said, “Ramous, I’m worried for her and the rest of the office staff. There are twenty-two people in that office. I won’t put it past St. Paul to kill everyone for the package if they think it’s damaging to them.”

“Peter, let’s hope that St. Paul hasn’t figured out what your friend Thomas did with those files. The best

thing we can do is retrieve the material and find out what's in it."

"All right, I don't see what other choices we have."

"I'm on it, Mr. Daniels."

Ramous took the last sip of his coffee, went home, changed clothes, and left for Portland.

He called Clair on his way out of town. "Hello, Tillamook Police."

"Hi Clair, I'm heading to Portland as we speak and I should be out of town for the rest of the day. Take charge and push everyone around until I get back, okay?"

"Sure, Chief, do you want to speak with anyone else?"

"Is Larry in today?"

"Yes, he's in the lunchroom."

"Let me talk to him. I'll put him in charge today. Let's see how he handles himself. If anything comes up or changes, I'll call you."

"Okay, Chief, stay out of trouble. Goodbye."

Larry answered, "This is Officer Catch. Hi, Ram."

“Hello, Larry, I’ll be in Portland for the day. I’m putting you in charge until I get back. Do you suppose you can handle the responsibility?”

“Sure, does that mean I’m getting a raise?”

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. We’ll make this a trial run. Otherwise, I’ll put Jenkins in charge.”

“Jenkins! He’s only been here for two months. Listen, Ramous, if you need to insult me, talk about my cooking, say something awful about my car, or my weight, but please don’t insult my work by putting Jenkins in charge.”

Ramous responded, laughing, “I knew I could count on you. I’ll contact you when I’m back in town. I hope to be back late this afternoon or early evening. Have a good day, Larry.”

“You too, Chief, see you when you get back. Bye.”

Ramous didn’t get into Portland until 1 PM, because of a wreck on Highway 99.

Once at the District, Ramous walked in and showed his badge and identification to the woman sitting at the reception desk.

She got up and retrieved the package from the vault. The package was big enough for legal size paper to fit flat and about as thick as a ream of paper.

“Thank you, Mam.”

“Is there any update on Peter Daniels, Chief?”

“No, I’m sorry there are no updates on Mr. Daniels.”

Ramous had to mislead the receptionist and doing so without lying was difficult. He wouldn’t lie, but keeping information back was acceptable in this situation.

Ramous wanted to get home and open the package, but was compelled to drive by St. Paul. As he passed the building, he saw there were vacancies. So, he parked and entered the building.

Once inside, he asked the receptionist, “What floors housed the St. Paul Research Corporation.”

She told him about the top half of the building, but they vacated the building three days earlier. “I came into work, and their offices were empty.”

“Do you know how many employees St. Paul had?”

“There were sixty-five employees in this building, and they left overnight, with no warning.”

Ramous wondered what became of Mike Davies. He assumed Davies would have called him should something like this happen.

Just as Ramous got back into his car, his cell rang.

“Hi Ramous, I see you went over to the Lloyd building. St. Paul is closing the Lloyd building office. They gave no advanced notice. I had planned on calling you, but I can’t talk right now. Zoe called to tell me you entered the building. The Second Gens are still monitoring the cameras around the building. Be careful, and I’ll call you later this evening. Then, you can tell me why you’re in town. Goodbye.”

Ramous didn’t enjoy being caught on camera. Now, he had to explain to Davies why he came to Portland.

Perhaps it was a bad idea to go by the Lloyd building. Ramous wasn’t sure whether he should tell Davis he got the package. If Zoe knew about the material, he did too.

Ramous would play coy when Mike called until it was too obvious, and Mike acted in the correct manner. Then, he would force Mike to meet rather than discuss anything over the phone.

Ramous got back into town at 6:30 PM, so he called everyone he needed to tell he was back.

Now, after the long day, he had to make his own dinner as Peter and Emily were nowhere around. *I'm getting too comfortable.*

It turned out Peter and Emily spent the whole day in Ramous' office purchasing furniture, online, for the Beach Comber.

Under other circumstances, Ramous might encourage their relationship, but now he had reservations considering the investigation. He would be angry at Peter if Emily was hurt because of him. He wanted to tell Peter to consider Emily's safety and back off, but couldn't bring himself to do so.

Emily came into the kitchen and told him the furniture would arrive on the Monday after next, which was a big step in getting the bed-and-breakfast up and running.

He remembered as a kid how excited everyone was when entering the tourist season. Even though the hotel rarely had an empty room, life was different when the actual tourist season opened. He was a kid again. He missed his parents. They are what made it exciting for him

and everyone else. They were just that way. He wondered if Emily could bring the same excitement to the hotel.

She also told him she was ready to hire the staff after interviewing for the last week. Most of those she planned to hire worked for the Rignor family before. Ramous was happy about the news.

Later in the evening, after Emily went to bed, Ramous asked Peter to meet him in the office. He pulled the box out and opened it. It was full of paperwork and several thumb drives.

The material proved damaging for the St. Paul Corporation. The files gave names, sources of funding, and detailed experiments, which were illegal in every country in the world. They included information about the Gens work for the US government in espionage, and included several undercover acts, with names of foreign leaders, operatives, and marks. The information included written orders to terminate six targets.

The material also contained top-secret reports written to three different members of Congress revealing several covert operations, with names of management, including Terry Hatfield, and Bret Sawyer.

Sawyer supervised the First Gens, and Hatfield was a new supervisor of the Second Gens. The material included the names of twenty team leaders, including Zoe. They called the team leaders logistic coordinators, and each had twelve other names listed under them as agents in the field.

Bret Sawyer, being the supervisor of the First Gens, was Dania's direct supervisor. Dania was the lead agent under Sawyer. She coordinated all other First Gens.

Ramous said, "Most of this information will land us in prison if they find out we've seen it. I suspect not only does the St. Paul Corporation want to hide this information, but there are probably one or two government agencies that might enjoy putting two idiots like us in the ground,"

"I have to agree. The question is, what should we do? Thomas must have sent these files for the same reason he gave me the other material, to give to the media. Otherwise, they will probably bury us in a deep dark hole for the rest of our lives."

"Perhaps that's the safest thing we can do, but let's make copies and give them those. Safe or not, I'm satisfied the paperwork makes it clear Bret Sawyer was the person responsible for the murder of my officers and friends. I

suppose he's the same person responsible for the murder of your friends. Let's make copies and let the media do their work, and me mine. I'm going after Sawyer."

Other documentation included in the material, named a notebook containing the original plans for the Angel project. It didn't give founding names, but referenced sources of funding, project purpose, and a client list.

Ramous said, "It would be nice if we had that notebook."

"I agree."

Ramous copied all the information and put the originals into the office safe.

The News

As he and Peter exited the office, a middle-aged man, Mike Davies, walked in through the front entrance and stood in the main lobby.

As Ramous approached, Mike said, “Wow, these roads are dark. I passed three times before I found this place. You need a sign out front.”

“We haven’t hung our business sign out yet. How are you?”

“Good, thanks.”

They both walked into the sitting room and sat.

“Ramous, I suspect you went into town looking for the files Zoe told you about. Did you find them?”

“Mike, I had several reasons to go into Portland, none of which had anything to do with St. Paul, although I drove by the building and saw the vacancy signs, so I stopped.”

“Right. They closed the building and sent everyone home. Management gave only one day’s advance notice. Something big happened to cause them to vacate so quickly. When I arrived at work, security ushered me out the door, and they told me nothing other than to take a vacation. I was told a supervisor would contact me within the next week regarding a new assignment. They gave all the scientists in the labs only one day to vacate too. They reassigned most to Seattle, and a small group was sent to Florida. St. Paul’s main labs are in Seattle, and I don’t know anything about the one in Orlando. In the past, when something like this happens, they gave management a warning in advance and also supplied us with a narrative for the news media to go with the warning. Afterward, the media always reported troubling news about the Corporation. I haven’t gone home since I left the office. Instead, I went downtown Portland and checked into a hotel. I believe I was the only one ushered out of the building, and I’m sure it was for a reason. St. Paul has not contacted me yet. I suspect they’ll fire me, but it doesn’t matter I don’t enjoy working for them anyway, never have.”

Emily came in, interrupted, and set coffee before both of them. She was supposed to have gone to bed. They

waited until she left the room before they talked again. Ramous was concerned Emily might be eavesdropping.

“Mike, I believe my hotel manager is trying to figure out what’s going on. She moves around too quietly at the most unusual times. She was supposed to have gone to bed a while ago. I’m working hard to keep all of this from her. If she finds out, I might have to fire her and send her back to Ireland. I don’t want to send her back, but I will if she gets too nose-y. I’m telling you this, so you won’t assume she knows what’s going on, she doesn’t.”

“Okay, Ram. Now, regarding the Gens, the Second Gens interrupted an operation in Tacoma where six First Gens were converging on the family of a woman on the list. They had already killed two of the family members and were waiting for two others to return home when the Second Gens caught them. I can’t put my finger on it, but none of these acts regarding the list make sense. After all the years they worked for St. Paul, and suddenly, they want to kill their maternal families. Someone has encouraged them to do this. I suspect it’s Sawyer, although it makes little sense. Sawyer is an absolute jerk, but there’s probably someone higher than him pulling strings. Anyway, St Paul had their murders covered up and called it a home invasion.”

Ramous became angry. “Just more to add to the murder list!”

Mike said, “Zoe told me she was unaware of the move by St. Paul. She and the rest of the Second Gens are operating out of Vancouver, Salmon Creek, where Terry rented space to give them a base of operations. Zoe said Terry was not aware of the move out of Portland either and assumed that it had nothing to do with the Second Gens and their current operations. She admitted, something scared them, and they reacted by closing down the Portland office. Ramous, what about the files in Portland? Did you find them?”

Ramous gave Davies a hard-observant stare, Mike squirmed waiting for an answer, but Ramous had to size him up before telling him about the files he collected that day.

“I found more files and thumb drives, and secured them in a safe place. They contained names, sources of funding, espionage, and details regarding several illegal experiments.”

“So, you reviewed the material? It would be smart of you not to keep it here with you. I might add, most of the information is highly classified, and if you’ve looked at it,

you would know that you have broken several federal laws. That won't matter because if St. Paul finds out you have those files, you will be dead before you go to trial. Now, for your safety, get the information out into the public. Now's the time to do so. Take the information into the Oregonian and get in contact with a reporter named Billy Johnson. She's not on the St. Paul payroll. You can trust her. That should get the information on the evening news and prevent your lynching. Let's stop St. Paul together, okay?"

Ramous slid back in his chair, staring again at Mike as he stared back. "What a mess this is. I was a small-town Police Chief with a wonderful ability to mind my own business. Then, in one moment, I'm involved in an international incident, and everyone around me is in danger because of it. If it weren't for the death of my friends, I would walk away from this whole mess. But I want to prosecute Sawyer and anyone else involved with those deaths, and I'll be relentless."

"I understand. I didn't ask for any of this either. I had a good-paying job and good friends. Now, I'm on the run. Life changes without notice, and too often, we find ourselves in a place we never imagined. Speaking of being on the run, I'm moving into a hotel here in Tillamook. I'm

nervous about returning to Portland. I suspect they're aware I have been in contact with Zoe, which they don't, or won't like. St. Paul always gets suspicious when a person or persons outside of a project interact with those involved in a project, like the Angel Project. They have always fired them once they found out. I'm just going to lie low, and will call you the day after tomorrow for any updates."

"All right, do you want to give me a number, and I'll call you?"

"No, I'm not using my company cell any longer. I'm sure it's compromised. I pulled the battery out, so the GPS won't give me away. Tomorrow, I'll purchase two burners and give you those numbers so we can keep in contact."

"Mike, keep me updated, please. I'll need more information on who's responsible for killing my friends. Again, I'll not stop my efforts to bring them to justice. That's my top priority."

Davies acknowledged, shook Ramous' hand, and left to find a hotel in town.

The next day Ramous called into the Oregonian. He only had to call in and speak with management to get a

reporter to come to Tillamook. Because he was the Police Chief, they knew it was newsworthy.

Billy Johnson walked into the Tillamook Police Station at 11:00 AM.

“Good morning. Is Chief Rignor in?”

“Yes, one second,” Clair answered. Then, called the Chief telling him the reporter was there.

Ramous walked out to meet the young reporter with the Oregonian Newspaper, and ABC News in Portland. She introduced herself and followed him into his office.

Ramous thought she was too young for taking on such a big story.

“I expected I would have to come to see you, but thanks for coming here. I hope this information will start a federal investigation and reel in one of the largest and richest corporations in America. Can you handle such a big story?”

“Yes. What corporation are you referring to?”

“St Paul Research Corporation. I suspect the information I have will destroy them as it involves money laundering, corruption, murder and crimes against humanity, and several other illegal acts. I believe this

information is dangerous for anyone who holds the files until they're released. Please understand.”

“I'll keep it undercover until it airs.”

“Good, but I plan to assign an officer to you. Please don't provide information to the officer. I'll instruct him not to ask questions. If he does, please contact me, and I'll set him straight. I can't tell you how important it is you follow that rule.”

“Is it all right if I share this information with my superiors?”

“Yes, I'm counting on it. I hope you do so as soon as you get back, and please have as many people review the information as you can. Until you do, neither you nor my officer is safe. No one else besides us knows about this information at the moment. Again, get it in front of as many people in your agency as you can. Please do this as soon as you get back to Portland.”

“I will. The meeting is already scheduled.”

Ramous called Larry into the office and told him to go with Miss. Johnson.

“Larry, consider this young lady to be in witness protection. Don't ask why and don't let her out of your

sight. I'll contact you when you're done. You will need to stay in Portland overnight, and perhaps two days. Get five hundred dollars from accounting to cover expenses. I'm asking you to trust me and ask no questions. I'll explain when you get back."

Ramous gave the young reporter copies of all the information he had. Officer Larry and the young reporter left at 1 PM for Portland. So, he wouldn't be noticeable, Larry drove his personal vehicle.

Once Billy was back at the office, she met with everyone she could lure into the conference room. She explained everything Ramous told her and opened the files, revealing the damaging evidence about the St. Paul Corporation. Half of the room found the information damning, and the other half didn't believe what was being revealed. Their legal team wasn't sure the information could endure in a court of law.

The station, once they verified the information, planned to broadcast it over the next two days.

The next morning, Mike Davies called Ramous to find out whether he turned the material over to the media.

"Yes, I turned all the files over yesterday to the young reported, Billy Johnson, with ABC news. I expect it

will take a couple days to verify the information before they broadcast. I sent an officer for protection until such a time they did, or reject the story. They better not reject it.”

“I’ll call ABC today. I’m familiar with a few people in their organization and will support its authenticity, and I’m confident they will broadcast the story. Thanks, Ramous. Now, I’ll try to find out if there was anyone above Sawyer responsible for the murder of your friends. I’ll contact you once I find out.”

“You could have done so before. Now, I’m mad! Listen! If you want my cooperation, you better give me cooperation back!”

Ramous didn’t wait for Mike to say goodbye and hung up and walked out onto the back deck.

As he was standing there, Steven approached him.

“Hi, Ram! How are you doing?”

“I’m good, mad, but good. How are you? Have you talked with Emily yet?”

“Yes, I did. Why didn’t you talk to me yourself?”

“I have been so busy and preoccupied. She’s competent and only told you what I told her to tell you. We

have talked about this before. Has anything changed? Are you still interested in working full time?"

"I am, but I wasn't told when I'd be starting. When's my first day?"

"Bro, I need you to start today. Is that a problem?"

"Yes. Are you serious, Ram? Can you give me two days to finish three projects I'm in the middle of?"

"Well, Steven, maybe I should find another groundskeeper, one more eager to get on the job."

Ramous tried to laugh, but was too angry, "No problem, whenever you're ready to start will be fine. However, there will be a truckload of furniture coming next Monday. Emily will need your help to unload and place it."

"I only need two days. It shouldn't be a problem."

Ramous was happy to bring him back full time. It was becoming more like the old days as the reopening of the bed-and-breakfast drew near.

Steven sensed Ramous was mad, so he returned home and left him to stew.

Ramous was still mad at Mike Davies and wanted to arrest anyone and everyone responsible for the murder of the two officers, his friends, as did the rest of the

force along the coast. He already suspected the order came from someone higher than Sawyer, and even though he was mad, he hoped Mike would find out those names.

Ramous walked back into the kitchen where Emily was making tuna-fish sandwiches and tomato soup.

“Do you put dill pickles in your tuna-fish?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Will you marry me?”

“No, I don’t think so. Are you going to be a problem while I’m working here?”

“Well, if you continue making tuna-fish with dill pickles added, I’ll fall in love with you, and I can’t be moping around all day long being rejected by you as you make your potion number nine tuna-fish. I guess it’s good you nipped it at the bud before it went anywhere. Thank you, I guess.”

“Do you want tomato soup with your sandwich?”

“You’re pushing it, aren’t you? Yes, please.”

Ramous took his lunch, returned to the back deck, and sat at the table to eat his lunch. Emily joined him.

He told her Steven came and talked with him. She forgot to tell him when to start. Ramous told her he took care of it and he would start in two days. Also, he was available to help unload and set up the new furniture.

Ramous took a relaxing look around the courtyard to calm down. It was a beautiful courtyard, gardens were blooming, and the smell of spring was being carried around by slight breezes. He needed to unwind.

They had a pleasant conversation, and work wasn't mentioned. Emily told him about life back in Ireland, how she liked the Oregon coast, and how she needed a car.

Ramous forgot about the car.

“When you use the business VISA, they will call me to verify, but it shouldn't be a problem. No exotic race cars, Okay?”

“Can Peter take me around? He claims he's the perfect negotiator.”

Ramous was concerned, but Peter has proved himself to be discreet.

“Sure, if he can make himself useful, let him have at it. By-the-way, where's Peter?”

“I asked him to go over the books. He’s an accountant. So, I’m keeping him busy in the office, performing. I could use him to keep the books for the Beach Comber.”

“Emily, he’s a nice guy, but he’s a witness in an investigation. Once it’s finished, he will probably go back to Portland. You’re not leaving with him, are you?”

“Na, I’m staying here. I won’t get involved in a long-distance relationship. He’ll be on his own if he moves back to Portland.” She chuckled.

Ramous sensed the two were getting serious.

“Have you talked to Peter about it?”

“We have discussed it on and off. It’s a real cut in pay for him, but if I’m correct, and we hire him, you will offer a place to stay and a salary, right? That’s what you did for the last bookkeeper.”

“Well, the last bookkeeper was my mother, and there weren’t any apartments available in town at the time. Are you negotiating with me?”

“Yep.”

“Emily, as long as you bring in ten thousand a month, I don’t care what you do. So, let’s see what happens

after this investigation is over, and we will figure it out then.”

“Ok. Would you like more soup?”

“No, thank you. I’m full, but I plan to sit here for a while and unwind before I go home.”

“Okay.” Emily collected the dishes and went inside.

After sitting and proverbially smelling the roses for the next fifteen minutes, his cell rang.

Mike Davies called to tell him he contacted ABC and confirmed the information included in the material Ramous gave to Miss. Johnson. Davies knew several people at the organization, and they knew him and his position within the St. Paul Corporation. ABC scheduled a release of the information on the evening news for the following day.

That evening, Billy was sitting with her boyfriend eating dinner. Larry was sitting in his car across the street for the second night, eating pizza.

A man, in an overcoat, approached Larry’s car and fired two shots into his head. Larry slumped forward in the car. No one heard the shots as the man used a silencer. Then, the man walked across the street to Billy’s home and

knocked on the door. Her boyfriend answered, and the man fired two more shots into her boyfriend's head. Afterward, he walked into the house, fired two more shots into Billy's head. When he was done, he walked out the front door without closing it and disappeared into the night.

The next morning the paperboy noticed the body of Billy's boyfriend lying in the doorway. He called 911.

Officers called forensics to the crime scene. It was another two hours before they found Larry sitting in his car. He had survived the gunshots. Both bullets had only grazed his head and knocked him out. The driver door glass redirected the first shot, and Larry moved forward for the second, causing both only to graze him. He was fortunate.

An ambulance took Larry to O.H.S.U. Emergency, as it was the closest emergency room. Dr. Bradshaw was attending at the time and took over Larry's case.

Ramous wondered why Larry hadn't called that morning. He expected him to call in the morning to check-in.

So, when Ramous got into the office, he called Larry's cell. He planned on telling him to spend another day in Portland.

Instead of Larry, he got Dr. Bradshaw. Larry's cell was in his coat pocket and taken out and set on a counter in the emergency room.

Dr. Bradshaw answered when it rang. He just finished bandaging the officer and assigning him a room.

"Hello. Can I help you?"

Ramous recognized Bradshaw's voice. "Hello, is this doctor Bradshaw?"

"Are you calling on behalf of Mr. Catch?"

"Yes. Can you tell me what has happened to my officer? Is this Dr. Bradshaw?"

"I'm at a loss, but yes, I'm Dr. Bradshaw at O.H.S.U. Who am I speaking with?"

"This is Chief Rignor with the Tillamook Police. Mr. Catch is one of my officers. Is he all right?"

"He will be fine, Chief. However, I'll let Portland police fill you in on the details. Mr. Catch should be fine in a day or two. I have the name of the responsible officer you can speak with, a Sergeant Detective Hill at the downtown police station. I need to finish with Mr. Catch. If you would please call him, he can give you the details. I would let you

Speak with Mr. Catch, but he's asleep at the moment.
Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Doctor."

Bradshaw was evasive and somewhat rude, although Ramous knew Hill, so there should be no problem getting the information he needed from Hill.

A woman answered, "Portland police, how may I direct your call?"

"Hello, is Detective Hill available?"

"One second, please."

"Hello, this is Detective Hill. How can I help you?"
Ramous recognized Hill's low, scruffy voice immediately.

"Hi Derek. How are you?"

"Ram?"

"Yeah, how have you been?"

"Just fine, Buddy. How about you? And, to what do I owe the pleasure, Boss?"

"Well, my officer was shot while on a stakeout. I already know his condition, but what of the woman, the young reporter, he was protecting?"

“Right, I just got back from the scene. Sadly, she and her boyfriend didn’t survive the assault.”

Ramous, although saddened and angry by the news, was grateful Larry was alive.

“What happened?”

“We got a call about a body lying in a doorway this morning. When we arrived on the scene, we found a young man by the name of Steve Williams, lying halfway on the front porch of the residence. He was deceased. Once inside the house, we found a young woman in the dining room. She was also dead. Someone shot both in the head at close range. As for the officer, we didn’t find him until two hours later when a patrolman saw him slumped over in the driver’s seat of his unmarked car. He parked his vehicle across the street. He was out cold. Fortunate for him, the shooter grazed both the back and the front of his head. I assumed he must have been moving when he was shot, and whoever shot him didn’t check him afterward. Why was your officer on the street, Ram? It’s not your jurisdiction.”

“He was on protective assignment. He was to protect the reporter and certain information she was carrying. I’m sorry, Derek, it’s a complicated case and on a need to know basis, and I couldn’t get anyone other than

my department involved. I didn't mean to step on anyone's shoes, but I had no choice. Again, I sent the officer to watch over the young woman reporter, who was to expose corruption in a major corporation. Did you find any files or other media at the residence?"

"No, there were no files or anything to explain the shooting."

"I'm coming into town. How about meeting me at the Black Tiger? Do you remember the Black Tiger restaurant?"

"Yes, I do. The last time I was there, I was with you. It's noon now. Let's say we meet at 4 PM? Does that work for you?"

"Yes, I'll see you at 4 PM, and I'll tell you what I can then."

This investigation was getting too dangerous. These creatures move with impunity. He wasn't sure if he could handle it on his own any longer.

He stopped at the hotel before going into Portland. Peter caught him in the kitchen. He sensed Ramous was upset.

"What's going on, Chief?"

“Officer Larry Catch was shot last night. He will be fine, but I’m overwhelmed at how easy these creatures move and act. Do you have a gun, Peter?”

“Not with me, but I can handle one. I have a concealed carry permit and three guns at home. Do I need to go get them?”

“You have weapons and went on the run without one?”

“I wasn’t planning on shooting anyone, Ram. Do I need to go get them?”

“No, I have an extra 9mm with six twenty round clips I’ll give to you to carry. I don’t want anything to happen to the help, and I can’t bring anyone else into this investigation until it has saturated the news, and I’m not sure that will happen anytime soon. Someone murdered the young reporter I met with, along with her boyfriend, last night, and neither one survived.”

Peter understood the seriousness of the situation as he and Ramous went upstairs to the office. Ramous reached in a drawer and pulled out the 9mm and three extra clips and handed them to him. The way Peter handled the pistol made it clear he knew what he was doing.

“I practiced at least once a week for the last five years and am a great shot. Also, I have this same gun.”

“Good, just be sure you have it on you at all times and don’t shoot anyone without knowing who they are first.”

Ramous ate a quick lunch and left for Portland.

While driving into town, he thought about how to respond to Derek’s questions. Ramous didn’t want to lie to Hill, because he was not a liar even to his own hurt, but he needed to figure out how to answer questions without putting Detective Hill in danger.

Just as he parked at the Black Tiger, his cell rang. It was an officer from Seattle who was applying for Ramous’ second in line. He put an advertisement out on police channels for the position. He concluded that Larry was not the right fit for the job.

“Hello, Chief Rignor. I’m Detective Margret Jenson downtown station Seattle, and I understand there’s a position open, and I want to apply, if it’s still available.”

“Actually, I have no intention of putting a woman into the position. It requires too much physical work, and I’ve heard what they say about the Seattle police.”

“What? They are ten times better at their job than Portland police? I may file a grievance, Chief Rignor!”

“No, it’s a well-known fact they’re lazy and useless, sitting for long periods in their cars eating too many donuts while high on strong coffee twenty-four seven. So, go right ahead and file a grievance, little lady! Maggie, can you come to Tillamook this weekend? I’m reopening the bed-and-breakfast, so come and stay for the weekend. I have to meet with Derek in about two minutes. We can talk then. I’m sure we can work it out.”

“Okay, Ram. I’m already excited about coming and can’t wait to get on the Oregon Coast. See you then, Hon.”

Margret, whom Ramous always called Maggie, was a longtime close friend of his. They both advanced through the Portland ranks together. But she made detective one week before he did. It was she and her husband that Ramous was on his way to visit when he got into the accident.

Ramous imagined how nice it would be to have her around, especially under different circumstances. She was every bit as good a detective as he was, and he could trust her with anything.

He hoped this investigation ended soon so he could hire a second in command without worrying about them being in danger. He didn't need to worry about Maggie, but he worried about her husband and daughters.

Once it hit the news, every law enforcement agency will get involved, and he can concentrate on the person or persons who killed his officers and friends.

Ramous took a seat in the restaurant and waited twenty-five minutes before detective Hill showed up.

“Sorry, I'm late. There was another murder, and I'm assuming it relates to the two last night.”

“How so?”

“Someone murdered Billy Johnson's editor, a Mr. Charles Belmont, at the Oregonian. What's going on, Ram? What are you keeping from me? These murders make little sense, and I believe you're in the middle of it.”

“It's a matter of national security. Tonight, the news will expose this whole mess. After that, we can talk all you want. So, be patient. I'll contact you and let you in on everything. Trust me with this, Derek.”

“All right, but I expect you to tell me everything. I need to solve these murders, and it sounds like more than just murder.”

“It’s for your own safety that I keep this to myself. How was the editor murdered?”

“Someone broke his neck. His secretary came into work this morning and found Mr. Belmont on the floor in his office. The M.E. figured he had been dead for only a couple hours.”

Ramous knew St. Paul wanted those files and if they knew of their existence, they’d come after them.

“Did they find files or paperwork in his office, related to a project called the Angel Project?”

“No, no files this time either. What’s the Angel Project?”

“I can’t tell you other than asking that question. This isn’t good, Derek. I suspect more people will die. Have your local officers on alert. Tell the officers to be observant in the neighborhoods where the St Paul Corporation has a footprint. Again, I can’t tell you why, but tell them to keep their eyes out for any unusual activity, okay?”

“If I didn’t know you better, Ramous, you’d be in police custody right now.”

“I understand Derek, but several people have been killed because of this investigation. I want to keep you around for a while longer. Again, when the time is right, I’ll fill you in on everything. Has the forensics team completed their work at the scene of the young reporter?”

“Yes, they finished around three this afternoon.”

“I need to talk to Belmont’s secretary, if it’s possible.”

“Sure. Did you want to eat first?”

“No, I want to talk to her before the evening news goes on tonight.”

“Okay, I’ll get her address and we can go now.”

Hill called into his office and got the woman’s address.

An older woman answered the door. Ramous asked, “Hello, Sherri Wilson?”

“Yes, I’m Sherri Wilson,” she answered nervously.

“Hi, I’m Police Chief Ramous Rignor, and I believe you have met Detective Derek Hill earlier. I have a few

follow-up questions regarding the death of Mr. Belmont. Would you mind answering them?"

"I don't mind, but I'm still in shock. I'll answer to the best of my ability. Please come in."

Both men sat on the couch as Sherri took a seat in an overstuffed chair across from them.

Ramous asked, "Sherri, I'm sorry you have had to spend hours speaking with the police, but I need to ask a couple more questions for myself. Did anyone out of the ordinary or anyone you didn't recognize come into your office over the last couple of days?"

She paused for a moment, and then said, "Yes, a young man came into the office, asking for Billy. He was odd and moved around like he was handicapped. When I told him she was not in the office, he asked who her supervisor was."

"Can you describe him?"

"He stood about six feet tall, with short blonde hair. When he looked at me, his eyes were a brilliant blue. He must have been in his late twenties or early thirties, although he had no facial hair, clean face, and he never smiled. He was well dressed in a blue suit. We get people

wearing suits all the time in the office. That's probably why he didn't particularly stand out, but those eyes, I wouldn't forget."

"Did he say anything else, other than ask for Billy or her supervisor?"

"No, it was a brief inquiry. Afterward, he left, and I saw him get on the elevator."

"Sherri, I want you to meet with a profiler so you can give his description, so we can get an idea of what he looks like. Would you mind meeting with one?"

"Yes, I want to do so. I want this person found if he's the one who killed Billy and Charles."

Sherri cried. Both Ramous and Derek stood to console her. After she calmed down, they left.

Once outside, Hill turned to Ramous, "Ram, were you aware of the young man?"

"No, but I suspected someone might come looking for Billy. They apparently found out she had the files on the Angel Project and shared the files with her editor and a few management types at the paper. But I wouldn't have expected the man to have known that. Why he killed Belmont, I have no clue."

Ramous followed Hill to the Portland Police Station, where they both took a seat in the coffee shop. Derek was more than curious and kept grilling Ramous about what was going on. Ramous had to leave when Derek acted angry for not getting the answers he wanted.

“Derek, I need to get going. I still have a long drive ahead of me, and I want to get back before it gets too late. Please keep me posted on any additional information you come across. I’ll keep you updated on everything I can. When my investigation is complete, we will sit, and I’ll confess everything, okay?”

“All right, Ramous, I’ll keep you to your word. See you later, Buddy,”

“Bye, talk to you later.”

Ramous left Derek in the dark. Nothing he could tell him would help with his investigation, so it was better to leave him safe.

Ramous stopped at the hospital to get Larry. The doctor released Larry, and he and Ramous drove back to Tillamook, leaving Larry’s car behind. They planned to come back and retrieve his car at a later date. Ramous asked him about the shooting, but Larry told him everything was normal, quiet, and uneventful the total time

he was watching Johnson until he was shot. There wasn't much else to say about it. Larry had a headache and tried to sleep most of the way back. Ramous dropped him off at home and went home himself.

Melissa and Catherine

Ramous noticed a shadow standing in the bushes as he pulled into the driveway of the Beach Comber.

“Is someone there? I’d come out if I were you.”

A soft voice spoke in the darkness, “Hi Ram. How are you?”

“I’m fine. Is that you, Zoe?”

“Yes.”

“Why are you hiding in the bushes?”

“I didn’t want to startle anyone. I could see you weren’t home, and I was worried I might frighten your friends.”

“How long have you been there?”

“Since three this afternoon.”

“Come on. I’m staying in the three-bedroom house on the property. From now on, you can wait for me there.”

Ramous reached in his pocket and pulled out his key chain where he kept an extra key for the house. He took it off the chain and handed it to Zoe.

“Here, take this key so you won’t need to hide in the bushes, just let yourself in when you need to wait for me.”

Zoe said nothing. She took the key and put it in her jeans pocket.

Ramous put his hand on her elbow to direct her, “What’s that on your elbow?”

“It’s a bone spur. Every Gen has one just below the elbow. I don’t know why it’s there, but it comes in handy for quick identification.”

“I have a similar one on my elbow, although I’m not a Gen. I got mine when I broke my arm from my accident up in Seattle. It’s not as pronounced as yours.”

Zoe felt his arm and said, “That feels awful suspicious. Are you sure you’re not a Gen?”
“Quite certain.”

Once inside the house, Zoe asked Ramous to turn on the TV. Afterward, she changed the channel to the national news.

A reporter was talking, “We are not sure who detonated the bomb, or how many victims there are. Local police and FBI have stretched crime scene tape around a three-block area, and they have evacuated everyone within the area. They have just put the fire out, although it was a small fire compared to the size of the building. Most of the damage was from the explosion, which brought the whole six-story building crashing down on everyone inside. The blast also destroyed several houses in the three block area.”

“Ramous, the building belongs to the St. Paul Corporation and is used as a research facility. It’s where I was born.”

The reporter continued, “It’s not clear if the research taking place in the building caused the explosion. No one is sure what happened or why, and it may be days or weeks before we do. Over three hundred people were inside the building when it exploded, which makes this so devastating.”

Zoe turned off the television.

“This isn’t good news, Ramous. Also, I learned this morning they killed Dania last night in a raid. She was killed by a grenade. They found pieces of her, which

included her identification number. That should make you happy. She no longer can hurt you or anyone you care about.”

Ramous didn't say anything. He knew that Dania was probably acting on orders from someone higher up. So, he was not overly moved by her death.

He asked, “Are the two related?”

“I think so. I assume that because of her death, seventy-three other First Gens turned themselves into the Seattle office this afternoon. So, St. Paul brought in around two hundred Second Gens to provide security. Before the First Gens turned themselves in, they strapped on some high end explosives. Once most of, or all, the Second Gens were inside, they set them off. The rest you saw on the television. The explosion killed all the First and Second Gens along with forty-seven employees of St. Paul, researchers and management.”

“What about Mike Davies? Was he there?”

“No, he's still in Tillamook. He contacted me to tell me of the situation and said he planned to contact us tomorrow to brief both of us. He said he talked with an employee who saw a First Gen detonate themselves when that last of the Second Gens walked through the front

entrance, and then the whole building came down. Now, the surviving Second Gens are nervous. I have two friends who are planning on coming here tomorrow. Do you mind? They have an RV and since you have a small RV park, would it be all right if they stayed there for a few days until everything gets straightened out?”

Ramous paused for a moment. “That will be fine. I’ll prepare a spot for them, and it should be no problem. They can stay as long as they need to.”

“Thank you. I knew I could depend on you.”

“Yes, you can, Zoe.”

“Ram, I suspect they will only be here for a few days, only until we get all the information. We won’t know anything more until the CIA cleanup crews finish and a thorough investigation is made. They can’t let the investigation go on too long because the neighbors will need to move back in, and they don’t want to draw any more attention than they have to.”

Just then, headlights came shining through the windows. Ramous went out to the front porch to see who it was. It was a new mobile home. He called for Zoe, assuming it was her friends.

Ramous said, “Well, that didn’t take long.”

Zoe answered, “I wasn’t expecting them until tomorrow.”

Two attractive young women stepped from the vehicle and ran up to Zoe and hugged her.

Mel said, “Hi, Sweetheart.”

Cat hugged and kissed her on the cheek.

Zoe turned and said, “Ram, please meet my best friends, Melissa, and Catherine.”

Both ran over to Ramous and hugged him.

Melissa said, “Hello Ramous, we have heard a lot about you.”

Ramous wasn’t sure what to think, but greeted both women and invited them inside. Ramous was always a little suspicious. It was his nature.

Once inside, Zoe asked, “Weren’t you coming tomorrow?”

Mel answered, “Well, with what happened in Seattle, we got anxious. That was an act of war. How bold they have become!”

Then she spoke in Russian. Zoe looked at Ramous and answered her in Russian.

Ramous didn't care, so he walked into the kitchen to make a sandwich, and figured if it involved him, they would tell him. He wondered what his involvement with the St. Paul Corporation will be from this point on.

What about his involvement with Zoe? Their encounter on the beach had quite an impact on him and invaded his thoughts constantly. How could he care for this woman? Was she a woman? She seemed like a woman in every respect. How confusing. He realized it did not matter; he cared for her. *What if Zoe was in the building? What if?*

Ramous bent over onto the counter, sick to his stomach, considering the possibility. Until this moment, he hadn't realized how important she had become to him. It was all too fast.

Zoe came walking into the kitchen. "Are you all right?"

"I'm fine, just a cramp from not eating today."

"Mel's going to move the RV to the park. We don't need anything tonight, so you can set us up with power and water tomorrow if that's all right."

“Okay. If you guys need anything in the meantime, just holler.”

“You’re a wonderful person, Ramous, and I’m happy you’re in my life.”

Then she said, “Ramous?”

“Yes?”

“I’m falling for you, be careful.” She smiled at him and walked back into the living room. He was totally put off guard now.

“She’s certainly bold,” he whispered to himself. He did not expect that, and it made him more anxious.

When Ramous got up the next morning, he went to the hotel where Emily, Zoe, Mel, and Cat were sitting at the counter in the kitchen. He was surprised to find them there. Emily was pouring coffee when he entered. They looked at him as if expecting him to speak, “Good morning, ladies. Is there any coffee left?”

Emily retrieved a cup from the cupboard and poured one for him. “Good morning, Ram.”

The other three just stared at him.

He asked, “What’s going on?”

Emily answered, “Your friends and I were talking about going to Canon Beach and Seaside. It’s a perfect day to go shopping.”

Zoe got up from her chair, hugged Ramous, and said, “Good morning, Ram. Did you sleep well and do you feel better this morning?”

When she sat down, everyone in the room remained silent while staring at both of them.

“I slept well, and I’m better this morning, thank you. Have you seen Peter?”

Emily answered, “Haven’t seen him yet. We’re supposed to buy a car today. I’m sure he’s hiding from me. I’ll go bang on his door and get him out of bed.”

Once Emily left the room, Ramous informed the women Emily knew nothing, and it needed to stay that way.

Zoe explained she had already told them of the situation.

“Thank you, Zoe. I need to go into the station and should be back around noon to get the RV set up. Will you be okay until then?”

Everyone agreed, as they were going into Cannon Beach and Seaside to shop for clothes anyway, and wouldn't be around for most of the day.

Ramous looked at Catherine and said, "Catherine, you're awful quiet."

Mel answered, "Catherine lost a special friend in the bombing yesterday. She has been quiet since. Usually, we can't shut her up. In fact, we were all supposed to be there, but slept in because the batteries died in our alarm clock, which was a first for us."

Ramous cringed as he looked over at Zoe. She gazed back at him as both Melissa and Catherine took notice of the two.

Just then, Emily and Peter walked into the kitchen.

Emily mentioned Peter was taking her into the car lot early to finish purchasing a car for her. She told them they'd be back by 11 AM, and available to take them into town. So, they all agreed that 11 AM was perfect because it gave them time to get ready.

Peter turned to Ramous and said, "Good morning, Ram."

"Good morning, Peter."

Peter asked, “Do you need me for anything?”

“We need to meet this afternoon. We have a few things to talk about.”

“Okay. As Emily mentioned, we should return around 11 AM. Would you like to meet then?”

“No, let’s meet at 1 PM this afternoon.”

“All right, see you then,” he said as he and Emily walked out the backdoor.

Ramous told the three they could use the lighthouse suite to shower and get ready should they need it.

The lighthouse suite was a small attached building at the back corner of the hotel, built in the shape of a lighthouse. It was one floor higher than the hotel and had a spiral staircase leading to a large circular suite at the top. Windows surrounded the whole room, where one could look out in every direction. It was the honeymoon suite.

He gave keys and directions before he left to go into the station. The whole way in, he worried about what kind of trouble those three women might get themselves and him into.

Back in the kitchen, both Melissa and Catherine stared anxiously at Zoe.

Cat asked, “Zoe, what are you going to do once St. Paul has dealt with the First Gens? Are you going back to work for St. Paul?”

“If my thinking is correct, they believe we’re dead, right?”

Cat answered, “Yes, I’m sure they do.”

“So no, I don’t plan on telling them I’m alive just yet, and besides, I’m not sure if there will be a St. Paul Corporation when this is over. Once it’s out what they have been doing, it will be the end for them.”

Mel said, “I doubt it, Hon. A company like St. Paul never goes away. I suspect they could be accused of setting off a nuclear bomb and walk away from it unscathed.”

Zoe answered, “I have a sick feeling you’re right. What are you two planning when this is over?”

Mel asked, “Zoe, do you recall when Cat and I left for Denmark last year?”

“I do, yes.”

“They sent us to find a German by the name of Perry Holstein. He was a German Muslim, who was funneling money to the Muslim Brotherhood, Hezbollah,

and several other terrorist organizations fighting against Israel. Do you remember he was a billionaire?"

"Of course, I do. Okay, so?"

"If you recall, we found him at the same time the Israeli Secret Service did, the Mossad. We were too late to infiltrate his organization, but we did find something special, for Cat and me anyway."

"What did you guys find? What did you do, Melissa?"

"Hold on, Hon. Perry was wealthy. He kept two sets of books, one for business and one for his personal life. So, the Mossad raided his offices and killed Perry, his personal accountant, and several others who were keeping books for his activities. They also killed an Iranian General who Holstein was holding meetings with. The Mossad's targets were Holstein and the General. Holstein planned on funding a terrorist operation into Israel. We never found out what the operation was. Hon, the Mossad moved through the building so fast they didn't find the safe holding the ledgers kept by his personal accountant. They weren't interested in those personal ledgers anyway, only the business ones, which, we understand, contained all the names and organizations who were helping Holstein funnel

large amounts of money, through Iran, to several terrorist organizations.”

Zoe said, “Do tell.”

Cat answered, “Aren’t you the eager beaver. Well, the Mossad didn’t stick around to be found out, so they left in a hurry, taking a small safe containing the information they were looking for. We learned as much from a CIA operative in Denmark who’d been in contact with the Israelis. The idiot neglected to tell us we were competing with Israeli Intelligence. So, as the Mossad left, Mel, and I broke into Holstein’s Office building. We found another safe the Israelis missed or didn’t care about. Well, you know, no one can break into a safe like Mel can. We found his personal books in the safe, including twenty-three secret, offshore bank accounts, with account numbers and access codes, totaling six-hundred-forty-three-million dollars.”

Zoe said, “You didn’t say anything about that. Did you do what I think you did?”

Cat answered, “Don’t get ahead of us, Zoe. I’m getting there.”

“Okay.”

“The safe contained a personal diary which included all of his close family and friends. All of his friends except one were murdered or had been killed because of their terrorist activities. The Mossad left that last associate dead on the floor of his office; he was Holstein’s personal accountant. He had no one else except two nieces, both living in Germany. His diary made it clear they didn’t associate with him and hadn’t seen him for over twenty-five years.

“Zoe, there was no one to give all those millions to. The safe included his will, in which he left all of his money to his personal accountant and a dead Hezbollah operative. When you briefed us about the mission, his name was in the list with a dozen other dead terrorists. The money belonged to no one. Also, as you already know, no one in this world can forge signatures and documents like I can. Well, maybe you can, but I think we’re pretty close.”

“I’ve already figured out what the two of you have done.”

“Of course you did, but you’re not letting me brag in the least bit.”

“Okay, continue to brag, Cat.”

“Well, I forged a will and other pertinent documents which gave us access to Holstein’s offshore accounts. We took all the money and transferred it into ten different accounts under different names and closed out the old accounts. If anyone traced those accounts, they’d find nothing of value. We now have access to all his money, so when this is all done, both of us will change our names and travel for the rest of our lives. Oh, I forgot to mention, not only do we have six hundred forty-three million in the bank; we have thirty-seven properties around the world. Those properties are worth at least another six hundred million. We also gained five private jets, including a Gulfstream III sitting at a private hanger at JFK in New York, another Gulfstream III, and two decked out Airbus A319s, and last but not least, a 727 all sitting in a personal hanger in Madrid Spain. Along with the other stuff, we got two yachts. One is a sixty-foot Hatteras, and the other one is a one-hundred-thirty-foot Nauta Air 130. The Hatteras is moored in Seattle. The Nauta is moored in Port Jackson in Sydney, Australia.”

“So, you two were rather ambiguous on what you did during the operation. I knew the Mossad interrupted your mission, but nothing about what happened afterward. I

didn't ask either. Yet, you didn't tell me any of this, Why? How come you didn't leave before now?"

Cat answered, "We didn't tell you because we thought at the time you might be too much of a company man, or woman, and might have made us turn it over to the government, or worse, St. Paul. Boy, were we wrong about you, Hon. We have been waiting for the right time to leave without being found out or followed. Now, St. Paul thinks we were in the building in Seattle. As far as we know, St. Paul believes we're dead. We plan to leave it that way. So, this is the perfect time to go."

"Okay. I have one more question that has bugged me since I read your report. Tell me who set Holstein's building on fire? Was it the Mossad, or was it you?"

Mel answered, "We did. The Mossad was too sloppy, and they were in such a hurry. So, in the act of destroying the contents of the safe, we ended up burning the building down too. We grabbed a bunch of paperwork and other burnable materials from off a desk and tossed them into the safe. In the same room as the safe, we found a closet full of weapons. We dismantled several grenades and recovered a little over a pound of powder. We taped a ruler on the edge, leaning back, of the middle shelf, and attached

a release pin and grenade, and then taped it to the door. When we closed the door to the safe, the pin slipped up over the ruler. When they opened it, and I'm sure they did, the pin caught on the ruler, pulled the pin, and exploded, destroying everything inside, leaving only ashes. We didn't expect to burn the building down, the fire turned out to be the best way to cover our tracks. Besides, everyone inside was already dead, except whoever opened the safe. I'm sure it helped to cover the Israelis tracks too. The Israelis took Holstein, and we still don't know why. He was dead."

"Such operators. I'm proud of you two. Listen, if the issue ever comes up again, I'd protect you both with my life. You don't have to hide anything from me. I'm always on your side."

Cat answered, "Thank you, Zoe. I promise to never keep anything from you again."

Mel agreed, and said, "Two properties we took were villas in Barcelona. We plan to use one villa as our permanent home, so that we can have easy access to the hanger in Madrid. When we leave, we will take the Gulf Stream out of New York to Spain and put it with the others. Holstein, being so wealthy, tied up most of his assets in property, property titles, titles for the aircraft, and deeds.

We didn't even bother with his cars other than to take the titles. All of it was in his safe under various aliases. We found them and now they're ours. We are filthy rich Billionaires, the three of us, Zoe."

"Wow, you guys. I'm surprised the US government didn't investigate. Generally, they check for such things when characters like Holstein are eliminated."

Mel answered, "Cat, and I followed up on the US response, and you're right, under normal circumstances, the US government would have done that kind of research and found the treasure, but the American government wanted nothing to do with the Mossad hit. The US backed out without the slightest investigation and turned everything they had over to the Israeli Government. Israel, for political reasons, was not going back to research any further, and risk exposing their involvement in the hit to the United Nations. Israel blamed the hit on another terrorist group opposed to Iran. Consequently, Iran sent Hezbollah in to neutralize the group blamed for the hit. No one found out about what Cat and I did, no one. Zoe, you can join us."

"I will consider the offer. One more question. We were operating under Mark at the time before he died, didn't he figure it out?"

Mel said, “No, but we told him. We wanted to include him. Mark has always been good to us. We kind of told him without telling him to figure out how he might respond. He was killed soon afterward.”

“Did you kill Mark?”

“No, no, no. We told him, but he didn’t turn us in. He was eager to get in on the action, so we cut him in.”

“Is that what got him killed?”

“In a way, it did. He wanted to retire because he was tired of working in espionage and wanted out. He wanted to leave St. Paul, so we helped him out. We’re so clever, Zoe. You recall he lived outside Renton, right?”

“Yes.”

“Well, he ordered a hit on himself. He ordered the Sing brothers to blow up a home, his home, and blame it on the Chinese Mafia, the Red Dragons. St Paul knew the Dragons were looking for the person responsible for the deaths of those eighteen top management types killed in Hong Kong, the ones killed by the First Gen, Janis. Remember, she killed them during a bout of paranoia. Do you remember?”

“Yes. It created an international incident.”

“She’s dead, by-the-way. She was killed yesterday in the bombing, poor child. What a mess we have gotten ourselves mixed up in, Zoe, but hopefully it will work out soon. Now, let’s get back to Mark.”

“Yeah, go on.”

“Timothy 217 made both of the Sing brothers look precisely like two management types in the Dragon’s human resources. Afterward, Mark sent them in to blow up his own home. The Sing brothers never found out the house belonged to Mark. Sadly, the Sing brothers were also killed yesterday. The First Gens murdered a lot of our friends yesterday. I can’t wait until they’re all dealt with. Well, the explosion blackened almost an acre, and there was nothing left of the house. The FBI arrested the two Dragon leaders and charged them with capital murder. They sent both to prison for life, not like they didn’t have it coming, anyway.”

“That was clever.”

“Yes, it was. The idea was to catch the Sing brothers on a security camera, looking like the two gang members. Security cameras captured the two men at the end of Mark’s driveway when they arrived and left his property. Timothy was so good at his craft. When Mark

took over as our supervisor, he left instructions should anything happen to him, St Paul should wipe him from all company records, which is company policy anyway for everyone involved with the Gens, or espionage. The Sing brothers never found out who it was they murdered. St. Paul erased Mark from all company files. Afterward, he never existed as far as it concerned them. Now, he and Dee are living in a multi-million-dollar villa in Spain as we speak. It's one of the properties we got along with the others and is about seven kilometers from the one we intend to live in. We gave it to them as a wedding present, and they're living under assumed names and having the time of their lives.”

“Mark and Dee? How?”

“Once they declared Mark and Dee dead, we falsified records, DNA, etc. You know a little of this, a little of that. The cleanup unit found fragments of titanium where Mark's home stood, which is why the bomb had to be so big. It had to be big enough to destroy a titanium skeleton. Cat, who is almost as good as Timothy with disguises, made Mark and Dee look like a middle-aged couple. We created European passports and sent them on their merry way. “

Zoe asked, “Why did Dee get involved?”

“They were in love, Zoe. It can happen, right? I’ve noticed the way Ramous looks at you, and the way you look back.”

“Yes, I have feelings for him, and I think he does for me, but I’m not sure.”

Cat answered, “He does, you moron.”

Mel interjected, “If your love life doesn’t work out, you’re welcome to join us. You enjoy traveling as much as we do. It’s built into our character. Now, we can go anywhere in the world we desire. Regardless, if you join us or not, we will make sure you’re taken care of once this is over.”

“Thank you. I’ll consider it, Mel. I’m thrilled the two of you have a plan, and a lot of money to accomplish it. I don’t know what I’ll do when we’re done with this mess.”

Margret

Ramous spent the morning researching the bombing, including making calls to confirm the location and the ownership of the building.

Once he confirmed that, he turned his attention to Dania. He was relieved St. Paul took Dania out of the picture, but understood there were higher personalities in management who exercised control over her, like Bret Sawyer, Dania's direct supervisor.

His phone rang. It was Mike Davies.

"Hello, Chief. How are you?"

"I'm fine, Mike. You're the person I want to talk to. Can we meet?"

"Yes, I figured you wanted to talk. That's why I called. I just got back from Seattle and I'm at The Krab Pot restaurant. Can you meet now?"

"I'm on my way. See you in ten minutes."

Mike just finished a bowl of chowder when Ramous sat down across from him. He confirmed everything Zoe told him.

“Did you find any more information regarding Bret Sawyer?”

“Other than him being insane, and having a god complex, no. I’m not sure if he was in the building yesterday, so I don’t know if he’s dead or alive. Honestly, I’m suspicious that he may have coordinated the bombing, which means the First Gens were acting under his supervision. Often, Sawyer and his team infiltrated terrorist’s groups, particularly those who included suicide bombers. He, through his agents, often supplied bomb-making materials to factions who intended to hurt enemies of the US. A friend of mine told me that after a cursory analysis, he was confident the devices they carried had the same signature as other devices provided by Sawyer’s, team. Sawyer liked it when his agents went above, and beyond the call of duty, as it appears, they did in Seattle, although I’m surprised they became the bombers themselves. I suspect that after they killed Dania, they realized they didn’t have much time and took as many as they could with them. I could see Sawyer convincing them that they were next and those after them wouldn’t stop until they were all dead. That’s the kind of control he had over them. Also, the messier the operation, the more he liked it, and what a dirty trail they left. I’m certain the death of

Dania upset Sawyer. She was always his pet project. I can imagine the two were involved, as absurd as that might sound. There's no one else who could get her or the rest of them to act so crazy. Fortunately for you, Dania is dead, and it's been verified."

"How can you verify Dania is dead if they blew her up?"

"St. Paul confirmed her death before the First Gens blew the building up. As I told Zoe, they killed her during a raid at a safe house the night before. St. Paul identified her just before the explosion."

"Okay, how do we find Sawyer, or find out whether he's alive or dead? Listen, Mike, I'll go after him myself, just give me an idea where he might be. I'm relieved they have dealt with Dania. Now, I hate to beat a dead horse, but she was only acting on someone's orders. If she were not, I'd be dead already. I don't believe paranoid people can simply walk away from their intentions."

"I agree, Ram. All of this might be Sawyer's work. I believe that it may have to do with a hostile takeover of the Angel Project, meaning the First Gens, but I haven't heard whether he's alive or dead. I don't know if the files that Thomas Minor and Jill Halstead took had incriminating

evidence supporting such an accusation. I've heard rumors. If Sawyer is alive, I suspect he's in Washington. I've been told, on the back channels, where I still have influence, the word is while everyone is chasing after the murders of innocent people in Seattle and looking for the list of mothers, management is being taken out. St. Paul has lost six high-level officers in the Corporation, and several others in the Seattle explosion, all of them involved with the Angel Project."

"Mike! St. Paul created the situation! I don't even care about it! It's not my problem who takes over what. That's on them. It's enough I have to deal with the lives destroyed by these creatures. Mike, my friends are dead!"

Ramous was crawling out of his skin. Mike Davies was not his friend at the moment, because he was another reminder about the deaths of his friends. Davies was management in St. Paul and as far as it concerned Ramous, he was part of the initial problem.

"I can't talk to you right now, Mike. What are your plans for the next few days?"

"I will see what I can do to find Sawyer. I'll try to find out if he's even alive, and if so, where he might be

hiding. Understand, you will need a lot of evidence to bring this man to justice. Accusations alone will not work. I'll tell you as soon as I find out. You know, I'm sorry about your friends, Ramous."

Ramous said nothing further. He wanted to, but the words were not there.

Ramous got up, walked out, and returned to the police station. While sitting at his desk, he wondered why Zoe didn't mention Sawyer. He asked himself if she was holding back, and could he trust her? Sadness began creeping in. He struggled not to let it get to him, so he went about performing his ordinary police business.

With no crimes or activity along the coast, he returned home early afternoon and got busy working on setting up the RV, supplying it with water and power.

Looking around the park, he cringed at the mess considering how badly it needed maintenance on all fifteen RV spots. He wasn't planning on renting any spaces in the park the first year back in operation. He dreaded all the maintenance that had to be done to make the park usable. He always hated maintaining the park. Tourists always left a mess, and as a kid, he always had the responsibility to keep it clean.

He decided right then to convert the back ten pads into three-bedroom cottages. There was enough room to put in five cottages with a fenced yard for each one on the beachside. He could put a picket fence around each of the yards, and a tall slat fence between each cottage. The cottages could bring in another ten to twenty thousand each month. He could leave five pads on the roadside for those overnights who were driving RVs.

An hour later, just as he finished testing the water connection, Zoe, Mel, and Cat showed up.

Ramous said, “The RV has water and electricity now. I tested it and you also have hot-water.”

Cat answered, “Thank you, Chief.”

Zoe said, “Ramous, there are only two beds in the RV. Is there a room in the hotel for one of us, we can pay you for it?”

“Are you kidding, you will not pay for anything. I have the perfect room for you, Zoe. You can stay in the Lighthouse Suite.”

Mel and Cat stood staring at her as if they were being left out. Then Mel looked at the RV and then Zoe and snorted. Everyone half smiled.

Ramous asked, “What can you guys tell me about Bret Sawyer?”

Zoe answered, “He was lead management over the First Gens.”

She paused and said, “I know where you’re going with this, Ram. Yes, most believed he was behind the First Gen rebellion. And yes, that mean’s he was responsible for the deaths of your officers and friends, including Peter’s friends. No one has found him since all of this started. The First Gens have either killed him or following him.”

Cat chimed in, “He’s an odd man. Even a First Gen could tell. No one liked him because he often forced himself on young Gens.”

Mel added, “St. Paul has not found his body. First Gens like to display their work, so we assume because they haven’t found him hanging from a telephone pole, or wearing women’s clothes while sitting, dead, on a park bench, he must be working with them, more likely, they’re working for him. We should know before too long if he was in the building at the time of the explosion.”

“All right, but let me know as soon as you find out, please.”

Afterward, Mel and Cat hurried into the RV to shower and try on their new clothes. They spent thousands of dollars shopping. Ramous could tell by the number of bags.

Zoe asked, “Ram, we will find out what happened to him, if anything, I promise to let you know. How did you learn his name?”

“I found the other paperwork you mentioned when we were at the gate. There were hundreds of documents, several naming him and his position. The files also included the list of all the mothers involved, including thousands of women who had late-term abortions, not just the few hundred mentioned at first. Abortionists performed thousands of procedures worldwide. The list made me sick to my stomach. Something about that list bothered me. It was mostly a number of forms releasing St. Paul of any liabilities regarding medical procedures.”

“Oh. I’d like to see it, and I’m sorry I didn’t tell you about Sawyer sooner. We weren’t sure he was involved, and until then, there was no reason to go chasing after ghosts.”

“I’m sorry too, Zoe. I should have talked to you about it sooner, but I’ve been dealing with so much and

have become so used to keeping everything to myself. When I gave the files to the media, I only gave them copies of the information and kept the originals in my office. You are more than welcome to review all the files I have. If you desire, Mel and Cat can go through them too. All three of you are more than welcome to do so.”

“I’m not sure whether it would be helpful, except for the list. I don’t want the list to fall into the hands of the First Gens. If you have the list, we should destroy it. The remaining Gens would have no problem coming here and killing everyone in the hotel should they find out you have it. Please, let’s destroy it.”

“When I talked with Mike earlier, he didn’t act like the list was too important. Instead, he said the whole thing might be a hostile takeover of St. Paul, by the mysterious ghost, Sawyer.”

“The list is important. You didn’t give the list to the media, did you?”

“I didn’t give them the list. I understood the implications of doing so and kept the only copy in the office.”

“You’re a smart man, Mr. Rignor, handsome too,” as she kissed him on the cheek, and headed towards the hotel.

Ramous stood for a moment, dumbfounded. He grabbed her bags of new clothes and raced to catch up with her. He carried her bags all the way to the Lighthouse Suite.

“Looks like you didn’t do much shopping.”

“Yes, I did. Mel took the rest of my stuff into the RV. I’ll get them later. Ram, I’m hungry and tired, but first, let’s destroy the list before we do anything else. I don’t even want Mel and Cat to find out you had it, okay?”

“No problem, let’s destroy it right now.”

As they walked into Ramous’ office, he picked up a key and a book of matches from on top of the desk. He unlocked and pulled the documents from the top right drawer. He handed the paperwork to Zoe who found the list and gave it back to him “This is the list.”

As Zoe was glancing at the rest of the documents, Ramous bent down into the small fireplace in the office and set the list on fire, and held it until flames engulfed the whole list. When done, there was nothing but ashes.

“Thank you, Ram, everyone will be safer now, and don’t tell a single soul you had it. The First Gens would kill you if they found out you had the list or even looked at the names. They’d torture you, hoping you might remember them.”

Ramous and Zoe went to the kitchen where Emily just finished making soup and tuna sandwiches.

Ramous gave Emily a forlorn gaze as the three of them sat down to eat. Before his first bite, his cell rang.

“Hello.”

“Is this Chief Rignor?” asked a woman on the other end.

“Yes, this is Chief Rignor. What can I do for you?”

“Hello, Chief. This is Grace Holmes from Centennial School District. I found another package in the vault addressed to Peter Daniels, with no return address. I suspected this package accompanied the other package I gave you. I found it this morning when retrieving a school’s lunch money put in the safe overnight. By-the-way is there any news regarding Mr. Daniels?”

Ramous walked out onto the back deck before he responded, “No, I’m sorry, there’s no new information

regarding him. Regarding the package, please keep it in the vault and I'll come into town tomorrow and pick it up. Is that all right?"

"Yes, see you tomorrow. Wait, I'm leaving the District next week. Can I give you my address and phone number so you can contact me should you find what happened to Peter? Do you mind doing that?"

"I don't mind at all. You can give me the information tomorrow when I pick up the package. Make a list of everyone who might be interested in Peter's outcome. Then, I can notify all of his friends when we find out."

"Thank you, Chief. That would be great. See you tomorrow. Goodbye."

Ramous returned to his lunch, but said nothing to Zoe or Emily about the call. He couldn't talk in front of Emily, anyway.

Zoe, Mel, and Cat went sunbathing on the beach for the afternoon. Ramous and Emily spent the time discussing the possibility of converting the RV Park into rentals. It concerned him he might put too much on Emily, although she didn't seem to mind. She suggested they hire another clerk to manage and clean them. He agreed and wandered

up to his office to research contractors when his cell rang again. This time it was Margret.

“Hi Maggie, are you still coming this weekend?”

“Yes, we will be there tomorrow evening. Do you mind if I bring Hank and the kids?”

“I already told you to bring them along. I want to visit with Hank and the kids too. Hey! Is Hank still in construction?”

“Since he hurt his back, he only does small remodeling jobs these days, usually while the kids are in school. Why? What did you have in mind?”

“I need five cottages built, and I want to get them done before summer is over.”

“He’s not licensed in Oregon any longer. So, he can’t legally do construction work in Oregon.”

“He can oversee the project, right? He could help select the right contractors, and pull permits, etc. I don’t have time to do those things myself at the moment.”

Margret laid down the law. “Hank can still do so provided that it doesn’t stress his back, and it doesn’t interfere with his parenting duties. He has been a stay at home father for the last five years. The kids are too young

to be at home alone, and we don't do babysitters. Was that a condition of employment, Ram?"

"No, not at all. Let's talk about it this weekend when you guys get here."

Consequently, he wouldn't search for contractors until he spoke with Hank.

Ramous made a call into the office where Clair informed him that not even a mouse was snoring, it was so quiet. He told her he was returning to Portland in the morning, and to call him should anything come up.

Ramous spent the rest of the afternoon cleaning his office, stopping now and then to review the research material in the desk drawer. Every time he pulled it out, he got a sick feeling, as it made him reminisce about his friends.

Ramous was not thrilled about driving back into Portland. He was frustrated with Ms. Holmes. *I wish she would have found the package the first time.*

He got to the District office at eleven the next morning. Grace retrieved the envelope and handed it to him. The envelope felt empty as he ran his fingers along the edges. Ramous thanked her for calling him and holding

it for him. She gave him a list with thirty names of people who wanted to know the outcome regarding Peter. He reviewed the list on the way back to his car. He wondered what he'd tell these people when Peter returned.

Once back in his car, Ramous opened the envelope to find a key inside. He recognized the key belonged to a safe deposit box. There were no identifying marks on the key regarding what bank it belonged to. So, he called Peter, hoping he could tell him.

Peter answered, but said nothing, which is what he expected Peter to do.

“Hello Peter, this is Ramous.”

“Hi Ram, what can I do for you?”

“I have another package, your friend Thomas sent to the District. He sent two packages the first time, but the District just found the second. Listen, it contained a key for a safe deposit box, but I don't know what bank to go to. Do you?”

“Yes. When Thomas gave me the cash, which I have not spent, by-the-way, there was a bank receipt for US bank on 181st and Halsey. It's in Gresham. I bet it's the bank you need.”

“Okay, I know the bank. It’s just down the street. Let’s hope they let me open the box. Thanks, Peter.”

“No problem. Anything else?”

“No, we’re good. I’ll call you if I need anything more.”

Ramous’ next stop was the bank, but the manager refused to allow him access to the deposit box without a warrant. The manager did, however, confirm the key was to one of their security boxes.

Ramous had to call in a favor, “Derek, I need a warrant. Can you help me?”

Derek wanted more information than Ramous could give him, but offered to get the warrant for the box on the basis it was related to the murder of Billy Johnson and Steve Williams. Officer Hill wanted to be present when the box was opened.

Two hours later, he met Ramous in front of the US bank. They entered the bank and offered the warrant. The manager led them to the security box vault. Ramous opened box number 269, which contained a notebook and another key.

He peeked out of the vault to make sure a bank employee wasn't standing outside the door. Fortunately, bank policy allowed depositors privacy when opening their boxes. The second key opened box 315. That box was full of material and fourteen thumb drives, and another key. Each box Ramous opened included another key. There were seven boxes and each one full of documents, graphs, and reports. He thought it was oddly suspicious how Thomas got all of this stuff out of the building without being stopped. It seemed a little too convenient. How could they allow him to leave with so many files?

Ramous stuck his head out the door and asked for three file boxes. He filled the boxes and exited the bank. He was grateful no one was paying attention as he left with three suspicious boxes full of files that could never fit into a single deposit box.

After he and Derek got outside, Derek grilled him about his promise. "Eventually, you need to tell me what's going on, Ram. I just broke the law for you, so you better keep your promise!"

"I will, and the moment is getting closer all the time. When it's over, I'll have you come to the coast for a weekend, and I'll explain the whole mess. It will blow your

mind. It will be so big, and afterward, I'll write a letter to Hanson, telling him how we couldn't have accomplished what we did without your help. They'll promote you, no doubt."

"Okay, you better. Hey, aren't you advertising for a second in command over there?"

"Maggie will fill the position. We are already in negotiations."

"Oh, okay. Maggie, eh? She's smart and a fantastic detective. She will do a great job. You'd have a hard time finding anyone better, except me."

"Are you unhappy in Portland? Are you leaving the precinct?"

"No, but the beach would be a nice place to live and retire, someday."

He told Derek he needed to hurry because Margret and her family were on their way to the coast.

Ramous wasn't sure how to deal with all this new information. He decided to keep it to himself until he had time to go over it. He was more interested in seeing Maggie, Hank, and the kids.

Just like Emily, he already decided to hire Maggie as his second in command. She was perfect for the job. When they worked together, they could almost finish each other's sentences, and always knew what the other was thinking. That saved both of their lives more than once.

The Truth

Maggie and her family were waiting when Ramous got back to the bed-and-breakfast. He walked in to find them sitting in the waiting room with their bags scattered everywhere.

After all the hugs, Margret confronted Ramous, “You didn’t tell anyone where we were supposed to stay. So, we’ve been sitting here for the last hour and a half waiting for you.”

He looked at Emily, who was sitting and staring at him, with a smirk on her face, and said, “Emily, couldn’t you give them rooms?”

“Ramous, there’s only one vacant room left until Monday. They will not fit in one room, Sir.”

“All right, everyone come with me, except Emily, I meant everyone else.”

Ramous winked at her as he led them out the back door. He told them they’re staying in the three-bedroom-house and he will stay in the last room in the main building. Ramous grabbed a change of clothes and carried them to the room. He gave Hank and Maggie two hours to get

settled. Everyone met for a late dinner afterward and agreed to meet in the morning to go over the department position and the five cottages.

Ramous moved all the new files into the room where he was staying, so he could review them. He stashed them under the bed. They wouldn't fit in his small office safe.

The next morning, after breakfast, Ramous invited Maggie and Hank to his office.

“It's so nice to see you guys. It's been too long and I've missed you. Before we start, tell me what happened. I heard three hundred people were killed in an explosion in Seattle. Were you involved, Maggie?”

“No, I wasn't. No one was. The FBI, CIA, and other federal agencies took the lead. They told us to stand down. Home Land Security controlled everything from clean up to next of kin. Any firefighters and police officers, who responded, had to sign non-disclosure agreements or face termination. That was a horrible mess and made me eager to get out of Dodge. Do you know something about it, Ram? The tone of your question implied you did.”

“I forgot how perceptive you are. No, nothing I can talk about. Anyway, Maggie, I have already planned to hire you. When can you start?”

“You mean I don’t need to beg or threaten you with any improper activities from your past? I can start at the beginning of next month. That should give Hank time to prepare the kids and pack. Is that all right with you, Ram? If so, give me a job description, including salary and benefits, etc.”

“Yes. I haven’t created a job description and the old one is outdated. So, just-in-case it concerns you, the salary will be ninety-five thousand annually, with a thousand dollars a month living allowance. This is a small tourist town, so there aren’t a lot of reasonable rentals. The city tries to make up for it by subsidizing the cost of living. Maggie, do you remember the two acres in Manzanita my parents had?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Perhaps, if you took the job, you could rent while a house is being built on the two acres. Afterward, you guys could live there. I have been thinking of building on the property. Hank could design and oversee the construction. What do you think?”

Hank answered, “Let’s talk about it another time. We still have to sell our house in Seattle before we make those kinds of decisions.”

Margret agreed.

When her interview was done, Ramous and Hank spent the next hour talking about the cottages he wanted to build. They agreed Hank would oversee the project while the kids were in school.

Hank offered to do the oversight for three thousand a month until the project was complete. He expected the construction should take three months.

Before they finished, the kids came running into the office complaining about the time it was taking. Maggie promised to take them to the beach. Ramous said hi to the three of them and chased them out of the office.

Once they finished, he returned to his room to review the material he took from the bank. Ramous couldn’t believe what he was reading. He’d wait until the next weekend before he revealed the information to Zoe, Mel, Cat, Mike, and, maybe, Peter.

He joined his friends on the beach who were flying kites and playing in the surf. Maggie and her family were

having a wonderful time. It was nice hanging with Hank, Maggie, and the kids.

Ramous retrieved hotdogs and fixings from the kitchen, built a fire, and roasted them until they were black, ignoring the constant term, yuck!

“Would you please stop, Maggie? The kids will not eat if you keep it up,” he said, laughing.

Maggie and Hank returned to Seattle on Sunday afternoon.

Ramous was happy they came. Although, the information he was learning about St. Paul offset his excitement, and their plan for ‘world domination’ leaned on the scary side.

Although he made fun of the term, the real evidence was right in front of him. He moved all the files into the three-bedroom-house, and stayed awake until the early morning hours as he poured over the documents, graphs, lists, and reports. By Thursday, he had only read through half of the material, but still asked Zoe, Mel, and Cat if they could meet on Saturday morning.

He asked Zoe to contact Mike and see if he could come. He wasn't sure if he wanted to involve Peter, but would play it by ear.

During this time, when he wasn't pouring over information, Ramous made a point of spending time with Zoe. They were getting close. He worried about how the new information might affect their relationship. He wasn't even sure if there should be one.

Early Friday evening, while sitting on the back deck, Ramous asked, "Zoe, can I ask you a question?"

"Of course, you can."

"This may be an odd question, but how old are you?"

"That's an odd question, Ram. I was born in the year 1998 and became twenty-two years old last February. I don't recall the exact day, but after all the programming; I'm thirty-one years old. Why do you ask?"

Ramous didn't know how to answer her because he didn't want to upset or insult her.

"That's a good thing. Can you imagine me being involved with a teenager, say like twelve or thirteen years old?"

“Oh, I get it. How awkward for you. Does that mean you can date me? Am I old enough?”

“Who said anything about dating? It was an honest question. I didn’t know how aging works for Gens.”

“Okay, I like you too. You have no idea.”

After a short pause, she turned to Ramous and asked, “Do you have more questions?”

“Not yet. Shall we eat? Are you hungry?”

“I’m not hungry at all. We should go for a walk on the beach, and maybe we can hold hands, boyfriend. What do you think?”

Ramous was embarrassed. She had a way of getting his attention. “Okay, let’s go for a walk.”

Technically, Zoe was only eight years younger than Ramous, so the age difference was not bad, but he couldn’t figure out how such a relationship would work. When all this St. Paul stuff was over, will she leave? His thoughts made him apprehensive and sad. She was important to him in more ways than just this investigation.

As they walked along the beach, Ramous asked, “Zoe, it’s my understanding the Gens have IQs well above two hundred. How does that work?”

“Gens are intelligent, but I’m not so sure one’s IQ is a proper way of measuring their intelligence. There are so many factors involved with our way of expression.”

“Well, when we talk, I assume we’re at the same level of understanding. We talk with no conversational distractions, and we communicate well.”

“You realize, Ram, ninety percent of communication takes place at an elementary grade level. Having an expanded intellectual capacity doesn’t mean we can’t converse and understand each other. If I were talking with a scientist about a particular subject, the conversation might go right over your head. In fact, I often have conversations with other Gens most scientists couldn’t comprehend.”

“That makes sense.”

“Ramous, there’s something much higher than one’s reason, and every human being is capable of obtaining it.”

“What’s that?”

“Spirituality. Spiritual understanding is much greater than intellect. Spirituality makes the highest levels

of human, and even Gen, factual intelligence seem basic by comparison.”

“I find it amazing you perceive life in such a way. What led to your conclusion?”

“I read the Bible. It’s the most intelligent, spiritual book written and nothing else in this world can match it. We Gens were born in the lab and are test tube humans. Except for my skeleton, I’m not too different from you. We both have DNA directing our growth, even our propensity to have certain features and to be ill throughout our lives. Consequently, we’re similar. Ramous, those men who created us didn’t grow us. They only directed the growth process, and DNA did all the work. There’s no way humankind could recreate what DNA does. DNA came from an external source outside human understanding, and every Gen knows it.”

“Are you saying you believe in more than, let’s say, evolution. You believe in a greater entity, perhaps?”

“I wasn’t being cryptic, Hon. I believe in God and understand He created DNA. He created all life. DNA has a life component. If DNA were only bits and pieces of particles or matter, it would just sit where it was placed like

stones in a river or sand on the beach. It's not sedentary. It's alive."

"How profound. What perfect understanding you have."

"Well, after reading the Bible, I realized life had a spiritual element, one far exceeding intelligence. Those like yourself, because you're spiritual, have a higher understanding most can't get through intellectual education, and people like you understand life and its processes at a much higher level than the intellect can provide. The Bible changed my life. I made a habit of leaving bibles lying around so others could pick them up and read. I hoped they would anyway. So, there's a God, DNA has proved as much. Also, I believe in good and evil. I know there are spiritually good people and spiritually evil people. Most surprising of all, either is a choice. I often thought of myself as a machine. Most of the time, I did what they told me to do, until I read the Bible. Then I realized, unlike machines which do things they're designed to do with no option of doing anything else, humans and Gens have free will. We can choose at any moment to be good, evil, or indifferent. I learned all too well, because I used to rebel and hide from my superiors and wasn't the machine they hoped I would be."

“I’m having a hard time wrapping my head around what you just said.”

“You are, are you?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm.. You know, if St. Paul found out I had learned this, they would terminate me. Ramous, there’s a government agency holding all the patents and birth certificates of every Gen. If a Gen is killed and the police get involved, they pull the patent, deliver it to the proper authorities, and their death is filed away in a vault in Washington DC. St. Paul has the authority to end my life any time they wish, and there’s nothing anyone can do about it. It’s a good thing if they believe I’m dead.”

“Zoe, there must be a way to change that. I’ll not let that happen. If anything happens to you, I’ll go after them, even if it takes the rest of my life.”

“I believe you, Ram.” She paused and looked directly into his eyes.

“Ramous, I have never killed anyone. The closest I’ve come to doing so was Peter, and I did what I did to save his life. I have never killed a Gen either, although I would if I had to. I have a duty to protect human life and if

a Gen tried to hurt another person, I would do everything necessary to protect them.”

Ramous put his arm around Zoe’s shoulders and said, “I believe you.”

The two spent the next three hours walking on the beach, talking. Afterward, they ate dinner with Mel and Cat. They were all quiet during dinner.

Mel finally broke the silence, “I’ve contacted Mike. He said he will be here by 10 AM tomorrow.”

Ramous was nervous about the information he planned to share.

Mike showed up twenty minutes late, “Sorry about the flat tire.”

Ramous answered, “We understand, Mike. Let’s get started. I received a call from Peter’s old secretary about an envelope from his friend Thomas Minor. Apparently, the secretary missed it as it was sent with the first package. It contained a key to a safe deposit box at a nearby US Bank. I went to the bank and opened the box. The box contained a notebook and another key to a different safe deposit box. That box was full of documents and fourteen thumb drives,

along with another key. When finished, I opened seven safe deposit boxes in total.”

Ramous stepped to the side of the desk and slid out the three full file boxes he retrieved from the bank. No one said anything.

From the top of the desk, he displayed a notebook to the four and said, “This notebook includes the initial plans for the Angel Project.”

Mike interrupted. “You got these files from a bank? How did Thomas get all those files out of the building?”

“I don’t know. Perhaps he was just too smart to get caught, and I was wondering the same thing, but I doubt they let him just walk out with the files. I wanted you to know what I did and hoped we could go over at least the notebook this morning. I suspect it will take several meetings to get through it all. There are a lot of files and I haven’t even looked at half of the paperwork yet, or the several thumb-drives included in the files.”

Everyone agreed to go through all the material, even if it took several meetings.

Ramous held up a letter and said, “I want to point out this letter, first.”

Once he had their attention, he said, “On Thomas’ cell is a video of the lab where they stole all this information. In the video, he showed a container with a human inside. That container was in transit and was at the Portland labs for three days only. They were transporting it to San Diego from the Seattle lab. According to the letter, that Gen in the lab, in Thomas’ video, was born in 2017. The two containers in Thomas Minor’s video contained a donor child and a successful Fourth Gen, both on their way to San Diego to complete the growth process. Now, I have a question. Do any of you understand why they created the Gens in the first place?”

Mel answered, “The First Gens was an experiment in genetics. Doctor John Hartwig was a neurosurgeon and researcher in genetics. He was the first to grow skin cells on a potato. Ignoring all the steps leading to the First Gens, the end purpose was to study growth and how to advance human development and intellect, but when the US government learned of the Gens abilities, they inducted them into national security programs, to conduct espionage. They created the Second Gens for that purpose.”

“No, Mel. That’s not it. Do you recall I said the person in the container was a Fourth Gen?”

“Yes.”

“According to the files, Dr. Heartwig made several amazing discoveries. Those discoveries led to the first and second Gens, but they were not the desired beginning, end, nor for espionage.”

Ramous lifted another small notepad from the top of his desk and showed it to them.

“This notepad includes a list of over two hundred names, names of the rich, the intelligent, scientists, and a host of high-level international politicians. This list also includes the names of financial donors and politicians who introduced and push specific legislation through Congress and the Senate. As far as I can tell, it also names all the scientists who performed research for the Angel Project. The letter and notebook contain all the startup information with its intended purpose. The men and women were planning on becoming gods. They intended to live forever in a reconstructed body. With their renewable life, they planned to take control of the world. I know, it sounds crazy. Doesn't it?”

Mel asked, “Are you saying we were test subjects for a group of rich creeps, who wanted to become gods, and live forever?”

“Yes, exactly. St. Paul created the First and Second Gens for a single purpose, to lead them to the Fifth Gens by perfecting the growth and transplantation process. It was more by accident that the government got involved, but espionage was never the intended purpose. They started with aborted children, but the intention all along was to transplant an adult into an artificial skeleton and grow a new young body for certain people from around the world. The Fourth Gen in the container was one of eighty-seven adult human transplants to survive the process of inserting an adult human brain into the artificial skeleton.”

Mike said, “I overheard a conversation about that a month ago, but I thought it was just a hypothetical ‘what if’ conversation. I wouldn’t put it past St. Paul to do just that.”

“It wasn’t hypothetical, I guess. The file went on to say that once they were confident, the process worked and they could repeat the process several times without significant failure, St. Paul planned to transplant its leadership and a host of other people into those skeletons. They hoped to be the Fifth Gens. They terminated all the Fourth Gens before they removed them from the containers. There was no need to keep them alive because they were only prototypes. Let me take a step back. I didn’t mention the other group of Gens, the Third Gens. It blows

my mind, trying to understand what these people were doing. The Third Gens were the same as the Second Gens, with one exception. They trained, or implanted them in the most advanced areas of medical science, and there are ninety-six of these Third Gens with staff worldwide. St. Paul created the Third Gens to advance Hartwig's work. St. Paul has stated in the paperwork, the Third Gens have already exceeded expectations. These Gens make our modern-day medical practices and research look like the dark ages. Now, back to the Fourth Gen in the container, the person inside was number six hundred forty-seven. St. Paul murdered six hundred forty-six homeless people, provided that one is still alive, from around the world to create the prototype Fourth Gens. The notebook explained how the process worked."

Mel jumped in, "That's murder and should be enough to bring them down."

"You're right, Mel. If nothing else, St. Paul is guilty of mass murder. The problem is, it will be hard to prosecute them without names or bodies. St. Paul was cruel in their experimentation, too. They started by removing as much of the human body as possible before the subject died. The researchers didn't even use a logical process, like retaining the heart, lungs, or kidneys. They just removed parts and

recorded the results until the subject died. They had to learn what body parts were detrimental to sustaining life until the transplant was successful. So, St. Paul repeated the process over and over until they serially succeeded. They only needed to remove the brain and stem from the donor, but had to make sure the actual or artificial organs were in place and available to keep the brain and its stem alive until they can grow the organs through the growth process. Once they maintained the person long enough, they could finish growing the rest of the body, just like they did the First, Second, and Third Gens. They now say they can complete the process in less than one year. However, it has taken them eleven years of repeated attempts to become confident with the overall process. Within the next two years, they plan to implant St. Paul's leadership into the artificial skeletons. After implanting St. Paul's management, they will recreate world leaders, politicians, scientists, and a host of other people, everyone on the list.”

Mel asked, “Along with all the scientific revelations, you're saying they have a master plan to rule the world?”

“Yes, that's what I'm saying, and what these documents are revealing. Back to the beginning, the project managers talked about maintaining the viability of aborted

babies who were near full term, and how to keep them alive. They started that process in the late 80s early 90s. Once they established the process, they manipulated the cells, DNA, leading to Dania. She was the first successful creation, the first to survive in whole. When they reached one-hundred-fifty-three First Gens, the issue regarding schizophrenia appeared. They thought it wasn't too bad and a simple chemical change fixed it. So, the Second Gens were born. St. Paul scientists perfected the process with the Second Gens, but they still couldn't transplant an adult into the artificial skeleton. That was supposed to be the responsibility of the Third Gens. Now, that St. Paul scientists have completed hundreds of experiments keeping the adult mind and brain stem alive, they will move onto the next step, the Fifth Gens. Along with the Fifth Gens, they will create one more generation, the Sixth generation who will be utilitarian. The Sixth Gens will be security and soldiers for the Fifth Gens. Can you imagine an army of Gens?"

Cat asked, "Wow! Imagine how damaging this information is to the St. Paul Corporation?"

Mike said, "I had no clue. This is mind boggling. It's good you have those files, Ram."

“How so? I’m sure they’re still looking for them. If they find out I have them, there’s nothing to stop them from killing me. I hate even having this information here, but I don’t know where else to put it,”

Mike responded, “The rumor according to my contacts in top management, I still have a few friends at the top, is these files were destroyed in the explosion in Seattle. There were a lot of angry people because of the explosion, not because it killed over three hundred people, but because the files were destroyed. Now, I understand why.”

That modified the group’s sense of security, but nobody said anything.

Ramous could tell by the look on the young woman’s faces they didn’t have a clue about any of this.

Zoe asked, “We understood they created us for espionage. Is there more, Ram?”

Ramous answered, “Yes, there’s so much more, including names, funding sources, proposed laws, and more, but it’s time to quit for the day. We’ve learned enough to deal with right now. So, let’s give it a break before we decide what to do with this information. Next time we meet, we can discuss who in the media we can

approach. We need to find a personality popular enough, so that they won't get killed like the Oregonian staff.”

They all agreed.

Ramous worried about Davies' safety and at lunch offered to put him up in the three-bedroom until he was safe.

Mel and Cat became eager to get out of town, out of the country. They wanted nothing to do with St. Paul any longer, since St. Paul presumed the three of them were dead.

Ramous also worried about Zoe and was concerned about how she might handle the information. SO, he kept the rest of the information between himself and Mike. There was no reason to worry them further after how Mel and Cat reacted. He caught the two of them crying on the back deck. He realized they were young and overwhelmed. They planned to move on, anyway.

Later in the evening, Zoe explained that even though Mel and Cat were involved in espionage for many years, they never had to face their own people before. Besides, the information proved more than the two could handle as she explained how the rest of their team died in

the Seattle explosion. After telling Ramous, she cried for the next half hour. He held her until she stopped.

The next morning, as Ramous made his way to the kitchen, he noticed the RV was gone. For a moment, he assumed all three of them left, until Zoe met him at the back door.

“They left a note, Ram. I burned it already, but it said they were going to Spain. They had two villas there and will stay in one.”

She didn't think Ramous knew about Mark, so she said nothing about him.

Ramous liked both and was relieved when Zoe told him. It seemed like the right thing for them to do.

Sawyer

Except for Mel and Cat, who left for Spain, the rest of the group met the following Saturday.

Ramous planned to present new information as the last time they met was mostly about the Gens. Meanwhile, Ramous asked Mike to continue looking for a media contact to pass the documents on to. Mike needed to find a national reporter; a well-known name St. Paul couldn't just wipe from the face of the earth like they did Billy Johnson.

When Ramous thought of her and her boyfriend, who was even more innocent than she, he became angry, but he wanted to use his anger as motivation. If nothing else, he wanted to bring those to justice who killed all those people, including his friends.

Mike told him it might take time to find someone. So far, no one seemed interested in the material, especially when Mike had to be careful about what he revealed.

Come Saturday morning, Ramous, Zoe, Mike, and Peter met in Ramous' office to go over the files

Ramous included Peter because of several accounting documents and expected Peter to decipher them.

He told Peter to follow the money.

Ramous set up a large folding table in the office and laid the files out so they could access them easily.

He turned to Mike and said, "There are fourteen thumb drives I haven't looked at yet, but I've stayed up late every night going through the paperwork. We need to get through this so I can concentrate on training my new assistant. I need to be one hundred percent when I do, and all of this research is burning my brain out."

Zoe reached out and put her hand on his shoulder and said, "I understand, Ram. You're not alone. We'll get through this together."

"Yes, I believe we will. First, I want to find where the Gen patents are. Mike, do you know about the Gen's patents, and where we might find them?"

"St. Paul has thousands of patents. With every small item or process, they create a patent. There's not enough

room in this hotel for them all. So, you need to be more specific.”

Zoe said, “Every Gen has a patent. We are all marked with its number on our pinky fingers and the heel bones of our feet. If a Gen should die and public law enforcement agency get involved, St. Paul only needs to provide the patent for the Gen and those agencies will have to back off. St. Paul can kill any Gen any time they choose and not face prosecution. Legally, we’re their property.”

Ramous said, “So, Zoe, and I figured that we want to find those patents first. I was hoping we might at least find out where they’re keeping them and how to destroy them.”

Mike offered to make inquiries regarding those patents. It was becoming clear the group depended a great deal on Mike. They expressed their gratitude, thanking him for involving himself so deeply. He could have just walked away.

He looked at Ramous, and asked, “Does this mean you’re going to help with bringing the corporation down??”

“I guess, but first we need to find those patents.”

After they finished discussing the patents, Ramous handed Peter two ledgers and a stack of financial documents to review. “If you wouldn’t mind, just concentrate on the financial records.”

As he was handing the stack of ledgers to him, one fell on the floor. Ramous picked it up and looked at it. He sat in his office chair to further investigate the document. Everyone else continued to review other files.

Fifteen minutes later, he turned to Mike. “Mike, are you familiar with the name Louis Accardi?”

“It sounds familiar, but I have to say no. Why?”

“Louis Accardi is one of the founders of the St. Paul Corporation. He and five other billionaires launched the company in 1980. According to this document, they agreed to fund Hartwig’s experiments. In this document are five other men listed with their countries of origin. Accardi is from Italy, A Prince Khalid Faour from Saudi Arabia, Sebastian Fischer from Germany, Roger Pollen from Canada, David Goldberg from Israel, and Mark Canon from the US.”

There was another list of names below the first list. Some were scratched out and new names added. Ramous

knew they were retired politicians, or politicians who were still in office.

He handed Mike the document and asked, “Do you recognize any of those names from either list?”

“Yes, I recognize them, particularly Canon, who is a high-ranking Congressman from New York. I recall big donations coming out of Seattle and Portland made to him and others. A lot of money exchanged hands, but I had no clue St. Paul supported so many politicians.”

Ramous said, “Many of the so-called donations look more like bribes. As a detective, I’ve gone undercover to reveal these kinds of crimes, and most of the payments made to these politicians are bribes in how the money was paid and used. Ledgers like these are not for record-keeping. They keep them to blackmail anyone who might reconsider. It’s how they keep, in this case, the politicians in line. So, they often reveal actual payments and how they were made under the table, which is one reason I’ve asked Peter to follow the money.”

Mike said, “I always thought something was wrong when I see bills both State and Federal go through the House and Senate favoring St. Paul. I found it disturbing how most of those politicians aggressively supported

Abortion and Stem Cell Research Bills. Such bills were introduced regularly and always exceeded what I called human dignity. Those bills often created intense discussion on the floor because of their controversial nature. I understand now how these people were in St. Paul's pocket all along, and how many of those bills related to the Angel Project. It only makes sense the files name Canon as a founding father of the Corporation. He introduced and supported most of those bills. I always wondered why anyone stayed in Congress as long as he did.”

Ramous pointed at another stack of documents and said, “This document is related to those documents that explain where the Project started, who started it, and a different list of names of other world officials who were and involved with St. Paul. They include investments, company responsibilities, and a summary explanation of how those things are related to the Angel Project. These ledgers alone could be troublesome for St. Paul. Much of it proves treasonous activities, including documentation about payments paid to foreign governments allowing St. Paul to kidnap and murder their homeless.”

Ramous thumbed through a stack of papers on the table until he found another particular document. He handed it to Mike, who passed it around. “I saw this earlier.

I think it's a charter. It reads like a Nazi manifesto and proves St. Paul's intentions were evil right from the start. They understood what Hartwig was doing to children from the beginning, and points out that they didn't start with only aborted children. Also, Hartwig was an ancestor of Josef Mengele, and his library included most of Mengele's research. The last three pages of the document read like an inventory list of his research. He was a big supporter of the Nazi party from a young age and desired to follow in Mengele's footsteps. I assume that was the reason St. Paul funded his research. Hartwig didn't have a conscious and set no boundaries regarding the experiments he performed. Mike, I think it's a good idea for you to go through this and talk to your friends at St. Paul. See if you can find anything else about Hartwig and his relationship with St. Paul."

"I'll see what I can find out. I might add, anyone can write produce a charter or manifesto. As bad as one may read, they're not illegal unless they include the overthrow of the US government, or another department thereof. Hateful words don't always mean they're breaking the law. We still have free speech in America, and can't prosecute just because they express it in writing. I'm certain where St. Paul will be proven culpable is in how they kidnapped homeless men, women, and children to use

in their initial research experiments, and how that related to the Angel Project, again we'd have to prove that.”

The four of them spent the afternoon going through the material. Although it was just three file boxes, the files contained a great amount of information. The group found nothing related to the Gen patents.

Despite working together, it drained them mentally, discovering, and examining the material. St. Paul, from its inception, proved to be a treasonous and murderous organization. They were overwhelmed by the big job ahead of them.

As they were finishing for the day, they had a short discussion about how to get the information out. They encouraged Mike, again, to keep looking for a well-known national reporter.

Ramous was disheartened because they found nothing about the patents. Those patents were more important to Ramous than anything else the group discovered. He worried about Zoe and her safety. St. Paul believed Zoe, Melissa, and Catherine died in the Seattle explosion, but if they found out that any of them were still alive, they will send out a hit squad.

When they finished, Peter went downstairs to the Kitchen to join Emily for lunch, Zoe left for the bathroom.

After those three left, Mike picked up a small briefcase he brought with him. He set it by the door when he came in.

“Ramous. I’d like to show you something,”

He pulled out an odd-looking pistol with a big grip and said, “This is an EPP, Electronic Pulse Pistol. It doesn’t use bullets but batteries. Have you ever heard of ball lightning?”

“Yes, I have.”

“This pistol fires an electrical charge like ball lightning. Let me explain. If one were to shoot a Gen with a 45 caliber, ten times out of ten it would break the flesh but bounce off their skeleton. The pulse pistol will fire a ball of electricity, and when it hits their titanium skeleton, it sends a charge strong enough to knock them out and stop the heart. You don’t have to hit them anywhere specific. You just have to hit them. The weapon uses small rechargeable batteries loaded into the bottom of the grip. The batteries can fire twenty charges until they’re not strong enough to do the necessary damage. That gun is plastic. Only the

barrel and the generator are composite metal, protecting the person firing it.”

“Why do I need this?”

“If they find out Zoe is alive, they will come after her. St. Paul will send Gens to neutralize her. This is the only way you can protect her. I have one for her, and she knows how to use one.”

Once Zoe walked back into the room, Mike handed her a pistol. She looked at it, then at Ramous, and left the room.

Ramous asked, “What was that all about?”

“Gens don’t like the weapons. They don’t trust them,”

Mike pulled a patch from the briefcase.

“This patch will protect a Gen if they’re shot with an EPP weapon. The patch will absorb the charge. The patch creates a path of least resistance between the patch and the contact area. It draws the charge out rather than into the heart and other organs. Being shot stings badly, but the Gen will survive. Ramous, Gens haven’t been told about the patch. St. Paul has kept it a secret from them. Otherwise, they would steal them and they couldn’t

use the weapons if needed. Offer one to Zoe because I want to keep her safe, she's special. I'm not sure why she's so important, but she is. Also, I have two more weapons for Melissa and Catherine should they come back.”

After Mike left, Ramous and Zoe went to Cannon Beach. They ate a late lunch and spent the rest of the day walking around like tourists. Both needed to unwind. They spent the next two days doing beach things, and shopping.

On the third day, when they got back from one of their shopping trips, Emily mentioned a telegram for a Simone Rivers and asked Ramous if he knew who it was.

Zoe elbowed him when Emily turned to pick it up from off the desk behind the registration counter. Ramous understood it was for her. Ramous took the mail and carried it out onto the back deck and handed it to Zoe. “Who's Simone Rivers?”

“That's me. Mel, Cat, and I have given ourselves names no one else knows, so we can contact each other without giving ourselves away. St. Paul monitored our mail too.”

Zoe opened the telegram. It was from Mel, using the name Mary Jane, which wasn't funny, but it appeared to come from New York. Ramous wondered how they sent a

telegram from New York when they were in Spain. It mentioned they were in Spain and having fun, relaxing, and feeling better about life.

Zoe finished reading, “Their doing great. They spent the last couple of days enjoying the sun and the villa. Cat met someone and was already beginning a long-distance relationship with a Frenchman. Mel didn’t like him. She said he was too sneaky. She told me how to get ahold of them should I come to Spain.”

Zoe read the telegram out loud for Ramous.

When she read the invite, a look came across her face. Ramous knew she missed them. Not only did she miss them; she was afraid most of the time. Zoe worried that St. Paul could find out she was still alive and come looking for her.

It turned out that Margret needed a couple weeks more so she and her family could get situated. So, Ramous took a couple weeks off from work, and despite Zoe’s fears, the couple spent the time being tourists, shopping. *Man, she can shop!*

Zoe didn’t find it funny when he brought it up, so he answered wisely, he wisely mumbled, when she asked him about clothes, “do these pants make my butt look big?”

Mike came by Sunday evening, and as they were sitting on the back deck, Mike said, “There’s a rumor Sawyer was in London. He’s a Brit, after all. Since St. Paul has rounded up most of the First Gens, and now they’re probably looking for him. I’m surprised he’s exposing himself in the open like that. Apparently, he’s acting like a tourist, not doing much else. I guess his plan to take over St. Paul was a failure.”

“Thanks, Mike, for the information. Now, I’m curious. How did you get this information? Are you still working for St. Paul?”

“No. Long before any of this took place, there was a group of us in upper management who suspected St. Paul was dirty. We formed a little group after we discovered the Gens. I won’t give any names, but most in the group are still high in the organization. That’s where I get my information.”

“Okay, how are you doing for finances?”

“Ramous, I’m fine. I don’t need money now and have stashed most of my money into three different accounts under aliases. I’m still lying low, trying to stay out of St. Paul’s crosshairs, and I hope once this is over, I can return to my home, life, and friends.”

Ramous felt sorry for Mike. He must have given up a lot because of all this.

On Wednesday, Hank and Maggie moved to town a week later than expected. The sale of their house got hung up in escrow and almost fell through. Once in town, Hank entered negotiations with a local landlord, and rented a house until they could find one to purchase.

Friday morning, Ramous and Maggie went into the station where he introduced her to all the other officers and staff at the station, including Larry, who was back on limited duty.

“Maggie, register any weapons with Clair and then come into my office, please.”

Once in the Chief’s office, he gave her a badge and issued her a 9MM pistol.

“How do you feel about being Chief for two weeks, starting Monday? I’d like to take another two weeks of vacation, Zoe and I want to go to London. Do you mind?”

“That’s not a problem, I’ve run departments before, and the laws haven’t changed so much in Oregon to cause me to be inept. What will the rest of the station think?”

“I’ll tell Clair, she’ll keep them in line. It’s not for certain yet, but, regardless, it could be a good time to get to know the other officers and staff. “

Meanwhile, in London, Bret pulled up to his favorite restaurant for dinner. He’d been in London for six weeks now. He didn’t bother changing his name or concealing himself as he was in contact with a good friend within the corporation.

Before he got out of the vehicle, his cell rang. “Hello.”

“Hello, Bret, can you talk?”

“Hi Allen, got any news yet? I’m eager to get back to work.”

“Not yet. I’m still working on it. You left a mess, and upper management isn’t too happy, but they’re still considering it because no one else can control the First Gens, what’s left of them.”

“Okay, why did you call me?”

“To warn you not to do anything stupid until we can get this resolved. Just keep doing what you’re doing, acting like a tourist, and keep out of trouble and under the radar. Someone told me to warn you and tell you not to talk to

anybody, or there will be no chance of coming back. Bret, they're watching you. Do you understand?"

"Yes, I do. Thanks for the call, Allen."

"Goodbye, Bret,"

Bret was six foot two with an above-average muscular build. He wore a military haircut as he spent most of his life in the military. Although he was a Brit, he joined the US Marines at age seventeen. Before he was out of boot camp, they encouraged him to join Special Forces.

Bret excelled and moved up through the ranks and became one of the top trainers for three different departments of the military. After twenty-one-years in the service, he retired as a full Colonel.

The FBI recruited him to be a liaison with MI6. Three years later, he left the FBI for the CIA as an instructor in self-defense, urban combat, and undercover operations, particularly in the Middle East. Bret worked for the CIA for five years before St. Paul recruited him to train the First Gens in self-defense and undercover operations in the Middle East.

The Second Gens did not like him. So, another man by the name of Harris Gilmore trained them. Gilmore proved to be a much better trainer than Bret.

They tried to fire Bret, because of his frequent indiscretions with many of the female Gens, but the First Gens refused to work with Gilmore. Bret knew about the mental illness of the First Gens and used it to his advantage.

The call from Allen upset him, but he was hungry and looking forward to eating his favorite meal, prime rib, and lobster. He came to this restaurant at least once a week on Wednesdays, just for that meal.

As he finished ordering, he noticed two Arabs sitting four tables over. Something about them caught his attention. Focusing on one, he recognized him. It was Omar Badawi. The two of them have worked together undercover on three occasions in the past for the US and Saudi governments.

Bret became uncomfortable. He knew he was in trouble.

When the waiter came by, he grabbed him and said, "I need to use the bathroom, just set my dinner on the table, and I'll be right back."

He said it loud enough for the two Saudis to hear him.

The waiter agreed. Bret got up and headed for the bathroom. He knew there was a door out the back of the restaurant; there always is. Also, he already scouted all the exits as a matter of training, habit.

Once out the back door, things went black. When he woke up, he was tied and handcuffed to a metal chair.

Omar and another Saudi were standing in front of him, talking. When they noticed he was awake, Omar turned to him and said in his strong Arabic accent, “Well, hello Mr. Sawyer. It has been a long time. How are you?”

“I’m fine, Omar, and you?” he answered, and then asked, “Why am I here?”

“We need to ask you a few questions, and those corporate powers, your friends are concerned you wouldn’t cooperate. I tried to tell them you’re a cooperative man, Bret, but they wouldn’t listen and gave me certain instructions. So, here we are my friend.”

“What questions are those?”

“We want to know why you’re in London and who you have been in contact with since you arrived. Friends of yours are worried you might turn on them considering the

trouble you've caused. They want you to tell us if anyone else is involved."

"No one is involved with anything, and I have kept to myself hoping to get back to work for the corporation."

"I believe you, Bret, but I'm told you just don't add up, and I should ask a few questions, and then kill you. I hate to kill you, but I can make it fast if you tell me what I want to know, or we can drag this out. One way or the other, I believe we will find the answers we're looking for."

"Omar, you better kill me now, because I'm going to get out of this chair and kill both of you! Then I'll go back and finish my dinner."

The man standing next to Omar pulled his pistol and shot Bret Sawyer through the forehead.

Omar was mad and asked, "Why did you do that?"

Kamal, the man standing next to him, answered, "He was out of the cuffs already and almost had the rope untied. I could tell by how he moved his shoulder."

Omar walked behind the chair to see Bret was out of the cuffs and had just finished untying the last knot of the rope they had bound him with.

Kamal looked at Omar and said, “You need to learn how to tie a better knot.”

“I guess. Get his wallet and stuff his American driver’s license in his sock. Later tonight, we’ll dump him on the street. Law enforcement will conclude it was a robbery gone sweet. And then, call Allen and tell him Mr. Sawyer did not survive the questioning, and we never found out if he was in contact with anyone else.”

Kamal said, “Sour, you idiot! Gone sour!”

He paused, staring at Omar, and said, “Now, you dump him, and I’ll go to the hotel and pack our things. We need to get out of the country. And, Omar, instead of a public street, hide him where it will take a while to find him, in a trash bin or something. That way we can get out of the country before they find him. Quit acting like a moron!”

“Well, I didn’t want to kill him. I’ve known him for three years. He was a fantastic secretary.”

“Operative, you stupid fool! How did you survive so long?”

Omar ignored the insult. “All right, I’ll call you after I dump him.”

Because Ramous and Zoe were planning on leaving for London on Wednesday, they met on Tuesday morning at 10 AM.

Once everyone arrived, Mike turned to Ramous and said, “They’ve terminated Sawyer. They found him stuffed in a dumpster next to a hotel in London. I suspect St. Paul had no further use for him, or they couldn’t get over the trouble he created. Either way, he’s dead, and I have pictures of confirmation.”

He first handed the pictures to Zoe, who verified it was Bret Sawyer.

Ramous seemed unhappy, “Wow!, Zoe and I were planning on leaving tomorrow.”

“I just saved you a trip and some money, unless you’re planning to go for other reasons, other than kill Sawyer.”

“I wouldn’t have killed him. At least I don’t think I would have. That’s not who I am. Well, may God have mercy on his soul, probably no one else will.”

Just then Emily entered the room. She looked around and asked, “What’s going on?”

Ramous answered, “We’re just going over some legal paperwork is all.”

“Um, do I look like a dummy, Ram? Did you think I didn’t notice your secret meetings, the whispers? Something is going on and I suspect Zoe, Melissa, Catherine, Mike, and you two goons are in the middle of something big, illegal or worse.”

Zoe reached for the back of Emily’s neck, but Ramous stopped her just in time, “No, no, don’t do it, Hon.”

Zoe smiled at Emily. Emily wasn’t sure whether she should smile back or not. Ramous asked her to wait until evening when he and she could sit and talk. She agreed and returned downstairs.

“I’m not sure what to tell her. I can’t lie, I won’t lie. Now, because she and Peter are so close, she’s in just as much danger as the rest of us. We should give her an option to join us, or she will need to leave. I don’t want to lose her, but it’s for her safety.”

Everyone agreed, and Peter agreed to leave with her should the situation require it.

That evening Ramous and Peter explained to Emily about what was going on.

“Why did you hire me if all of this dangerous stuff was taking place?”

“I didn’t expect it to get this messed up. I wouldn’t have brought you here if I had known.”

Emily turned to Peter and said, “And you, Peter, how long before you would have told me? We are at a point where secrets are more damaging than helpful.”

“It was for your safety, Sweetheart. It’s all Ramous’ fault. He wouldn’t let me tell you!”

They stared at Ramous.

“Why, you traitor!”

Emily broke in, “Don’t call me Sweetheart either! Not after this.”

Eventually, they convinced Emily to calm down to where Peter could call her Sweetheart again, but he needed to say it carefully.

Emily stayed on as she was excited about running the Beach Comber and figured everything would work itself out, eventually.

Europe Anyone?

Ramous returned to work on Monday morning. He called Maggie into his office. “Good morning, Maggie. Are you guys getting settled in?”

“Good morning, Ram. Yes, we’re getting situated. It feels so good to be here. How was your time off? I noticed you didn’t go to London. What happened?”

“We decided to stay here. My British is horrible, and I don’t like gravy on my fries. So, we just stayed in town.”

“Did you need me for something other than to say good morning?”

“Yes, we need to talk. I need to bring you up to date on an investigation I’m conducting.”

“Okay. I was beginning to wonder if you were involved with something. What is it?”

I’ll tell you everything I can. I’m in the middle of an investigation regarding the St. Paul Corporation and its involvement in mass corruption, which is an understatement. It’s the most dangerous investigation I’ve ever been involved with. People have been murdered, and I do not want to risk you or your family, so the less I tell you the safer it will be for you.”

“When you said people have been murdered, were you referring to the two officers? Does this have to do with them?”

“Yes, and others, but I can’t tell you everything. I told you this much in case you need to fill in should anything happen to me. So, be prepared just in case.”

“That’s crazy, Ram. I came to work for you, not to take your job.”

“Maggie, covering for me is the job. You’re second in command, and first, when I’m unavailable. But don’t worry. If I need to leave, it should only be temporary. Because you can run the department, was one reason I hired you. I believed you could fill in as Chief should it become necessary. This investigation has a lot of

international players. So, I never know if or when I might have to leave for a time. You can fill in as Chief, and Larry can assist you. He's capable of that. I promise, when this investigation is over, I'll fill in the details. Right now, it's not safe to do so. Can I count on you?"

"I'm reluctant, but yes, you can count on me. Ram, nothing better happen to you, or I will dig you up and punch you in the nose!"

"I'm looking forward to it. Today, I want you to go over the roster and assignments. Also, get with Larry and make him show you around the District. He will be your go-to person when I'm not available."

"He's been doing that already."

"Well, keep at it."

Ramous knew that he could count on Maggie, and he knew he had to. The hard part was doing it without bringing her in on the investigation, but he couldn't live with himself if Maggie or her family were hurt because of this investigation.

He thought perhaps he should have waited until the investigation was over before hiring his second in command, but he needed to fill the position in case that

person had to take over, and he knew Maggie was the perfect person for the job, and she may not have accepted the position if he didn't offer it to her when he did. He couldn't risk losing her.

Maggie spent the rest of the morning reviewing the employee evaluations, hoping to learn about the rest of the department. She even read Ramous' evaluation and Board Minutes from the Mayor and City Council regarding him.

She said under her breath, "Typical Ram..."

In one of the Board Minutes, the Mayor complained about Ramous because he threatened to arrest him if he didn't pay his many parking tickets. They added up to over one-thousand dollars. Ramous told the Mayor he needed to obey the law just like everyone else. The Mayor got mad, but the Counsel agreed with the Chief. The Mayor paid the tickets to avoid arrest.

She liked how Ramous treated everyone the same. It didn't matter if you were the President of the United States, or a Homeless Person, Ramous always treated you as an equal, and with respect.

When she was done with the evaluations, she and Larry spent the rest of the afternoon driving around the District. He pointed out all the trouble spots and all the best

places to eat. She was already in love with the Oregon Coast.

The next evening, Mike came into the kitchen where Ramous and Emily were talking hotel business and asked him to meet him on the back deck.

Once outside, he said, “Let’s go for a walk. I have information that you won’t like at all.”

When they got to the beach, Mike explained to Ram, “I received a call from one of my more clandestine friends with St. Paul. He’s a good man and is working hard, undercover, bringing St. Paul to justice. He’s helped to provide me with information. So, when I say clandestine, I mean he knows things from the underbelly of the corporation.”

“How is it you maintain such close contact with so many still working for St. Paul?”

“Ramous, dozens of people working for St. Paul, who have learned what the corporation has done or is doing, want to bring those things to an end. There’s a small army of people around the world on our side. We are not alone. The information we’re holding is the most crucial evidence we could have to bring the corporation to its symbolic knees. With that said, my friend gave me some

disturbing news this afternoon. Miss. Johnson, and her boyfriend weren't killed by a First Gen. Instead, a corporate hit man killed them. My friend learned St. Paul has many such people who are in debt to them or just plain crazy, and will do anything for a buck. Portland has several of these immoral types in the police department. One of which is Derek Hill”

“Are you kidding me! You're saying Detective Derek Hill is behind the murders of Billy Johnson and her boyfriend, and he shot Larry?”

“Yes, but he knows nothing about the files. They tell him where to go, who to kill, and that's it. He has been on St. Paul's payroll for eleven years.”

“He was there when I retrieved the files from the Bank. I would have never in a million years thought Derek was that kind of person. How does your friend know this?”

“My friends, when I use the term, you understand who I'm talking about, have made themselves available since Tom and Jill were murdered. Some of those friends are high in the corporation and have come across this information through their own low-key investigations. They have been watching out for us from the beginning and

researching anyone we've had contact with regarding our investigation."

"Our investigation? Are we on the same investigation, Mike?"

"I believe we are, but maybe you have a different opinion, although it does not matter, they're watching out for both of us."

"Okay. Do they know about Zoe? Do they know Peter is alive? What about Emily? I'm worried right now. What about them?"

Mike answered, "As far as my friends and St. Paul are concerned, Peter and Emily are out of the picture. Zoe is another story, but there's no intention by anyone to reveal she, Melissa and Catherine are still alive. I took the liberty to have all of their records expunged. Zoe is cited in the records as your girlfriend. There will be no mention of her being a Gen. I hope I didn't make some wrong assumptions, but we couldn't keep her out of this. That was the best and safest way to handle her."

"I hope so. What can you tell me about Derek? How did he get involved in this? That's just unbelievable!"

“Well, I mentioned to my friends that Detective Hill was present when you retrieved the files. They went into research mode. Their research led them to Sawyer’s files on people such as Hill, all of which worked for Sawyer as problem solvers. Those files contained everything about how they recruited a person and the acts the person committed under Sawyer’s direction.”

“I’m still not convinced, Mike.”

“Perhaps, when I tell you how Sawyer brought him in, you might not view it so unbelievable. Sawyer spotted him twelve years ago. Sawyer was great at finding those who are easily tempted, so he sent two of his girls out to meet with Hill at a bar in downtown Portland. Hill took the bait hook, line, and sinker. Since he’s married, that kind of exposure would ruin his marriage and cost him his job.

“That figures. He’s always saying sexist things about women. There’s a limit, and I wondered why someone would make such comments when they’re married. His wife is pretty. I just don’t get it, but I understand it.”

“I know people like that too. Anyway, at first, Hill started small, arresting anyone in the Portland area who St. Paul had any consequential conflict with. He often planted

evidence to cause legal problems for such offenders, hoping they wouldn't be so offensive. Then, he moved on to strong-arming anyone who wouldn't comply. Eventually, he committed murder, and has killed seven people as of Billy and her boyfriend. There are fifteen other Portland detectives and officers in debt to St. Paul, just like Derek."

They walked and said nothing for a while before Ramous spoke, "Is there any evidence against him?"

"Yes, there's a lot of evidence in Sawyer's files. My friend has found out St. Paul has been looking at Hill's files because he has become a liability. They plan to turn over all that evidence to the Portland police. They're experienced at letting the system resolve their human resource problems. He will go to jail for murder. It's already in the works, and none of my friends plan to help him."

Ramous had to give it time for the accusations to sink in. He has known Hill for at least fifteen years.

On Friday, Mike got ahold of another local media company. It was PBS, but it was someone to talk to. They asked if Mike, and anyone else who could collaborate the story to meet them downtown Gresham.

After talking with everyone involved, Mike, Peter, Ramous, and Zoe agreed to meet them on Monday at 11 AM.

They arrived an hour early, and once they got there, Ramous' cell rang. It was Derek, of all people.

“Hi Ram, I guess you have heard I'm in trouble. I don't know what to do. I'm worried about what will happen to my family. Diane and the kids are going to live the rest of their lives without a husband and father. I'm sorry, Ram, but I don't want to turn myself into just anyone. Could you please come to meet me on a hundred twenty-second and Powell, at the supermarket on the corner? I might just kill myself right here in the parking lot if you don't. I have nowhere to go or anyone else to turn to.”

Since they arrived early, Ramous left to meet Derek. He hoped he could at least talk him out of taking his own life.

He left the other three at the office where they were to meet with the OPB reporter. Ramous forgot the files were in the back of the vehicle and almost turned around, but figure he should meet Hill first, assuming Derek still knew nothing about the files.

He parked the car in the supermarket parking lot as Derek had asked him. He was there only three minutes before his cell rang again. It was Derek.

“Hello Ram, I’m sorry it turned out this way. Where are you right now?”

“You know where I am.”

“Listen and listen carefully. I have your friends. I’ll kill them if you refuse to answer even one of my questions. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand Derek.”

“Where are the files?”

“I have them with me

Derek expected Ramous to leave the files behind after he called him. It was fortunate that he didn’t. If he had, they would be in the hands of St. Paul already.

Derek asked, “Do you remember the Costco just north of 162nd and Sandy?”

“Yes, I know where it’s at.”

“There’s a warehouse three blocks north of Costco. You will see a red corvette park out front on the road. Bring all files regarding St. Paul and drop them inside the

front garage doors of that warehouse. Once St. Paul verifies the information, I'll let your friends go. You have twenty minutes to get here. It will not take longer than that."

"Do you know what those files contain, Derek? Do you know the kind of people you're working for and what they're doing?"

"That's none of my business, just bring the files!"

Because of his answer, Ramous knew Derek didn't know what was in the files, and he didn't understand who he was holding hostage. They were just a means to an end for him.

Despite that, he was certain Derek wouldn't let anyone go. He expected once he dropped the files Derek will not have a choice but to kill them all.

Ramous was on his own, and no one could get there soon enough to help him. *I guess I'm going in with guns blazing, I hope I catch Derek by surprise.*

He found the Corvette parked out front, but pulled into the parking lot next to the warehouse. As he approached, he prayed, Lord, "I don't want to kill anyone, but my friends are in danger and I need to save them. I

can't do this by myself, so I'm asking for a miracle, and your help."

Ramous got up next to the outside wall of the warehouse and worked his way around to the front. There were no doors on the side of the building, so he had to go through the front entrance, which gave him no advantage.

Several windows were lining the side of the building, so he peeked in to see at least six men scattered around the building, inside. They tied his three friends up and hung them from the rafters, right over a stack of wooden containers.

Once he came around to the front of the warehouse, he saw another man standing just on the other side of the garage doors. He was dressed in fatigues. Ramous, at first, assumed he was one of Derek's men, but the man looked right at him and put his finger up to his mouth as if to tell him to be quiet. *Where did he come from?*

He made his way over to Ramous, and whispered, "I'm going in, follow right behind me."

The man threw several flash grenades and stormed the warehouse. It sounded like hundreds of shots being fired from inside. Ramous was stunned when one went off next to him. So, by the time Ramous got through the door,

the other man already went through the warehouse and out the other side. On the way, he knocked everyone out. All seven men, including Derek, were lying on the floor out cold.

Ramous looked up at his friends. They were not moving. He worried they were dead.

He ran, he climbed, he feared they were dead until he got next to them. Each of them was staring at the smoke-filled space below.

It was odd to Ramous that they had nothing to say. Finally, he said as he untied them, “Are you all right?”

“Did you see that?” Peter asked.

Ramous answered, “No, I didn’t. What? There was a man out front who came in before I did. I was stunned by one of his flash grenades.”

Mike said, I’ve never seen anything like it. I’ve never seen anyone move so fast.

Ramous looked around, but no one was there. All he could see, through the smoke, were the seven men lying on the ground, none of them were moving.

Ramous asked, “Where did he go?”

Mike said, "He ran out the back door! Ramous, he looked just like you."

"That wasn't me. Perhaps, you were seeing things. Did they drug you?"

Zoe answered, "No Ram. They didn't drug us. I have never seen a Gen move so fast. It was almost supernatural. I think it was an angel."

Ramous assumed they had drugged the three of them, probably LSD or another hallucinogenic.

Once they were off the containers, Peter came and stood in front of Ramous, "Let's talk about my salvation as soon as possible, okay?"

Ramous just looked at Peter and smiled.

Ramous knew God answered his prayer, but he missed the good part.

As they exited the warehouse, police cars came from every direction. The four of them were standing in the loading area just outside the front entrance with thirty cops, weapons pulled, yelling at them to get on the ground.

Several of the police officers entered the warehouse to find the men lying on the floor, all with illegal automatic weapons in hand.

Ramous identified himself and showed his credentials. He explained to the officers that Detective Hill was wanted for the murder of Billy Johnson and her boyfriend Steve Williams, also for shooting one of his officers.

Not one person was dead in the warehouse, but knocked out.

As they came to, none of them knew why they were at the warehouse or where their illegal weapons came from. They were all arrested on weapon charges and taken to jail, and they arrested Hill for murder.

Derek failed to retrieve the files. St. Paul had an upper level management operative in the Portland Police Department holding on to the arrest warrants until he succeeded or failed. Derek will spend the rest of his life in prison.

Mike suspected the reporter they were to meet was working for St. Paul and informed them of their intentions to give critical information to the media.

Although St. Paul didn't know exactly what files they had, but now they knew all the files were not destroyed in the explosion and fire as they believed. They

could not allow them to stay in possession of anyone outside the corporation.

The four of them spent the next two hours at the Portland Police Station answering questions about what took place. The interrogators were dumbfounded about how one person knocked all those men out, and how every one of them conveniently lost their memories.

If the majority of the station didn't know Ramous, they wouldn't have believed anything the four of them said. After two hours, they let them go.

On the way back to Tillamook, Zoe, Mike, and Peter could speak of nothing else other than what they saw.

Ramous hoped God would help him, but he had no clue He would do such a thing. There must be more to the St. Paul Corporation and what they're doing than he imagined. He was more confident now than before, believing he was doing the right thing, but he was most happy his friends and Zoe were safe.

He looked at Zoe and smiled. She smiled back and swung her arm over the back of his seat and laid her head on his shoulder.

She put her mouth next to his ear and said, “Thank you, Ram, for saving us. I love you.”

WOW! Where did that come from? Since he was driving, he just kept his eyes straight forward. Zoe chuckled, as did Peter and Mike. Oops, she looked at them, then turned red.

Mike spoke up, “They know we have the files, and they will come after us. We need to get this information into the public arena.”

Just then, as if it was part of the plan, Mike’s cell rang. It was Jane Myers from Trouble in Paradise. It was a well-known national news agency. They had a two-hour-long prime-time program twice a week dealing with corruption in the US, particularly in government.

She heard about the bust in Portland and was contacted by Jerome Waters. Jerome was one of Mike’s friends, still with the corporation.

He told Jane what was happening within the St. Paul Corporation and gave her Mike’s number.

Mike agreed to meet with her in Vancouver, Washington, in two days.

No sooner did Mike hang up when his cell rang again. It was John Scottsdale from The Daily. Jerome had also contacted him, giving him the scoop on Portland. He also wanted to meet with the group. The Daily was Trouble in Paradise's competition on a different channel Sunday night.

Mike didn't want to present the story twice, so he forced John to meet them in Vancouver at the same time they meet with Myers.

After the calls, Mike spoke, "Now, we have to figure out how to stay alive until then."

They found a small rental at the end of Netarts Bay, where it all started, and rented it for three days.

Peter was concerned Emily was not safe, so they dropped him off at the Beach Comber.

As he was getting out of the car, Mike said, "Peter, I have it from good authority you're no longer involved with this issue. It's best if you and Emily stayed here and act as if nothing has happened."

Peter was concerned, but agreed to do just as Mike suggested.

Mike's friends removed any references to Peter, Emily, and the Beach Comber from all pertinent records. Peter and Emily, even though Emily didn't have a clue, were safe and would never be bothered by the St. Paul Corporation.

Once the three of them settled into their cabin, each said how excited they were to have this information out to a legitimate news organization, and when done, they could all return to their lives.

Mike left to walk to the little market, on the beach, to get him dinner.

About a minute after he left, Zoe turned to Ramous, and said, "Ramous, will you marry me?"

"What?"

"If we don't make it for the next two days, I want to die with you as my husband. I want your name."

Then she asked, "Could you spend the rest of your life with me, someone like me?"

Ramous paused and answered, "That was the wrong question, Zoe."

Tears filled Zoe's eyes. He broke her heart by his response.

Then he said, “You shouldn’t have asked me if I could spend the rest of my life with you. You should have asked if I could spend the rest of my life without you.”

He paused and said, “I can’t comprehend it, Hon. I can’t imagine the rest of my life without you. Will you marry me, Zoe?”

“Yes, yes, I will.”

The two of them left for Tillamook to the local recording office to get a marriage license. Fortunately for them, the clerk knew Ramous and didn’t even ask for identification, because neither one of them had any ID other than a driver’s license.

Once they had the license, Ramous called the pastor of his church, who agreed to marry them. The pastor’s secretary and a janitor stood in as witnesses.

It worried Mike when he got back to the cabin and no one was there.

When they got back, he was angry with them for leaving and not telling him where they had gone.

Ramous said, “We went for a drive and talked. We needed to get something out of the way.”

Mike replied, "Please don't do it again without letting me know."

They agreed.

That evening, Ramous signed a letter giving power of attorney of his property and all his possessions to both Peter and Emily should he die or become incapacitated.

Ramous, Mike and Zoe met with both Jane from Trouble in Paradise and John from the Daily.

When they got to the meeting, there was a congregation of ten others, most dressed in suits waiting for them.

It concerned them until Mike saw a familiar face sitting in the room.

There was a table set up for them across from where everyone else was sitting.

Jane spoke up, Hello Mike, Ramous, and Zoe. We investigated what took place in Portland the other day. Everyone but Officer Hill was St. Paul security. That was interesting all by itself.

Mike, are you familiar with a man by the name of Jerome Waters?

Mike answered, “Yes, I am. He’s what I call a friend. My friends are high-level management within the St. Paul Corporation, trying to expose their misdeeds, for lack of a better word. The man to your right is Jerome Waters. Hello Jerome.”

“Hi Mike,” he said as he smiled at him.

Then Jane said, to my left is Arthur Moore, He’s the US Attorney General, next to him is Perry Whiteside, head of the CIA, and on my right is Harold Goodman, Director of the DOJ. These other men are with various departments of law enforcement.

They are here because of the magnitude of what has and is taking place within the St. Paul Corporation.

Harold Goodman said, “Jerome has been an informant for the DOJ for the last two years. During those years, except for an arrest here and there, nothing has come out of St. Paul that’s as damning as the files he claims you have. We already know there are several elected government officials in bed with St. Paul. We know they write and pass legislation to support the corporation, many of them receiving kickbacks, but we couldn’t prove it. Therefore, we’re here today to review those files so we can do what we need to put an end to this corruption.”

Mike and Ramous presented the files to the panel. The files shocked them even beyond their suspicions. It took two days of review to reveal all the corruption taking place worldwide.

The whole panel thanked them for their heroism and protection of the files.

Eventually, the federal government planned to arrest fourteen Congressmen and thirteen Senators and charged them with extortion, murder, and treason. They served dozens of foreign officials with similar warrants for their arrest.

The Attorney General's Office planned to follow up on every name of every victim listed in the files. They indicted everyone who was to become a Fifth Gen. The Attorney General's office planned to hire additional staff to deal with all of the prosecutions.

After presenting them with their information and backup, Mike gave them other names and numbers of high-level managers who supported their findings.

Mike stayed behind, in Vancouver, to work with Jerome and other law enforcement departments.

Before Ramous and Zoe left, Mike spoke to them, “When it’s safe, I plan to move to the Oregon Coast, near my good friends.”

“I hope you do, Mike. Thank you for getting us through this,” Ramous said as he hugged him.

Zoe hugged Mike too, and said, “See you soon.”

It wasn’t safe enough to return to the Beach Comber until both programs aired and arrests were made, so they stayed in the cabin at Netarts Bay.

On their second day back, around 6 PM, there was a massive explosion. The cabin where they were staying and the ones on either side were blown up. The blast was so massive nothing of the three cabins remained except for the burning foundations.

St. Paul found them, but it was too late. The information was made public.

The fourteen Congressmen and thirteen Senators will be indicted.

But was it too late for Ramous and Zoe?

The news was a shock to everyone involved. Maggie took it hard. She cried for three days. This was the

second time she lost her best friend, Ramous. He was the closest friend she has ever had.

Ramous left Peter and Emily power of attorney over three million dollars, the bed-and-breakfast, and another two acres in Manzanita.

Sunday night Maggie, Hank, and the three kids were watching TV when Trouble in Paradise came on.

“Welcome to Trouble in Paradise. Many throughout the world have wondered what has taken place at the St. Paul Corporation. Tonight, we have the story behind the damning accusations against one of the largest Corporations in the world.

“Before we tell the story, I want to celebrate two American heroes, ordinary American citizens, never planning to, yet refusing to turn away from the consequences of their heroism by giving their lives to save others, in fact, to save the world. The story starts in a small town of Tillamook, Oregon, where a police chief of the small community, and a young woman, who to this day continues to be a mystery, took on one of the world’s largest Corporations by exposing their evil agenda, including decades of perverted, sickening experiments against humanity.

“Before I present the rest of the story, I want to say thank you to these brave citizens for their selfless acts of bravery. Thank you!”

In the front room, one could hear the indictments and other arrests being made by the Attorney General and his new staff, all of which was muffled by the sound of a woman sobbing.

Meanwhile, in Spain, “Zoe, can you teach me Spanish. I’m tired of getting re-fried beans when I ask for a soda. I hate re-fried beans!”

“Yes, Hon.”

Back from the Dead

It was 8 AM Saturday morning. The sun was shining through the windows across from the reception desk at the Beach Comber. The phone rang and Gail, the new receptionist, answered, “Good morning. This is the Beach Comber. How can I help you?”

A man’s voice on the other end said, “Good morning. May I speak with Peter Daniels, please?”

“May I ask who’s calling?”

“I’d rather not say. Could you put him on the phone, please.”

He and Emily were just sitting down for breakfast when Gail walked into the kitchen. ‘Mr. Daniels, you have a call.’

“Who is it?”

“He refused to say. Shall I tell him you’re not in?”

“No. I’ll take it”

“Well, good morning, Peter. How are you? Are you able to talk right now?”

“Hello, Bill! Yes, but hold on. Let me go up to the office. I’ll transfer you.”

“How are you, Ram? I was wondering when we would hear from you.”

“I’m well. Sorry it has taken so long to contact you. I wanted to make sure it didn’t cause problems when I did. How’s Emily? How are Hank and Maggie?”

“I’m well, and they’re all fine. Margret is still mad at you. She says so every time she comes by. It will take a lot of apologizing to satisfy her. Maybe, you should call her.”

“Not yet, I’d need to be in a comfortable place for a couple hours, with a speakerphone. Just keep telling her I said I was sorry.”

“Don’t get me involved, you need to apologize for yourself. Now, Emily is doing an excellent job. She’s great with the guests. I’ve never seen a person act so natural with strangers in my life. People are booking rooms for the next year already, and it’s because of her. Was that normal in the past?”

“A few, but not many. How’s Hank coming with the cabins?”

“Hank’s almost finished with the cabins, they look great. We should be able to open them this fall, and the Beach Comber has been at full capacity since we opened. By the way, I’m living in the three-bedroom. I put most of your stuff in the shed. It’s there for you when you come back.”

“Thanks. Zoe and I have been keeping a low profile, but we’re planning on coming back once everything has settled down. I’ve heard nothing about St. Paul since we left. Give me an update.”

“St. Paul didn’t suffer as much as we hoped, and prosecution is moving slower than any of us like. Mike tells me they did indict a lot of management types involved with the Angel Project, and every Congressman and Senator on the list, except Canon. Canon fled the country, and no one knows where he’s gone. I believe there have been arrests in other countries too, but only where those countries were willing to cooperate with the US. Mike says there’s a lot of work left to do and it’s still a mess, but St. Paul’s plan for world domination has been exposed and dealt a significant blow. You should talk to Mike. He’s still knee-deep in all

of that. He only fills me in when I pressure him about it. Otherwise, he only comes here to get away, and has been a regular guest. We don't charge him. I hope you don't mind."

"He's always welcome, but I've already told you what my policy is. Anything after ten thousand per month is subject to management control."

"Well, we have been bringing in between sixty and seventy thousand every month. I have invested seventy-five percent of the profits in bonds, as you asked. Emily has been using the remaining funds to upgrade the grounds and flower beds."

"Good. Peter, we haven't talked about your job and the house in Gresham, what happened there?"

"I sold the house and quit my job. Oh, they found me in a hospital in Brookings as a John Doe, having gone through a near drowning causing me to have temporary amnesia. When the District found out I was alive, everyone sent get-well cards. I went in to the office and said hi to everyone. While there, I talked with the Superintendent and gave him my resignation. So, other than staying in the three-bedroom, I'm looking to buy a home on the beach."

“I’m sorry I wasn’t available to help with your transition. We had to leave. There was no other option.”

“I understand, Ram. Everything turned out wonderfully, and I’m thrilled how they did.”

“Good. I’m going to try to call once a week. Tell your receptionist my name is Bill, so I don’t have to be rude.”

“All right. Oh, The Attorney General has hired an army of what they’re calling corporate investigators. They’re going through all of St. Paul’s business records. The information we provided them was helpful. Mike gave me a secret copy of all the files and they’re stuffed, hidden, in the shed along with all of your clothes.”

“Good, is there anything else?”

“Yes, one more thing. An assistant AG posthumously prosecuted Sawyer of the murders of Jill and her family, and my friends Tom and Cindy. They also convicted him of ordering the murder of your friends. Mike insisted, and the government complied. I hope that gives you some closure.”

“Okay. Did anyone contact John’s family? You put all my clothes in the shed?”

“Yes, sorry. I didn’t know where else to put them. And, yes, they sent two FBI agents over to give his family the news. They were grateful someone came by and told them.”

“Did you put my leather jackets in the shed too? One of those happens to be my favorite. It better not get ruined.”

“Funny you should ask, because I did not put your leather jackets in the shed. They are hanging up in the closet in one of the empty bedrooms. Ram, I’m at least a five on the Richter scale of six for common sense, my friend.”

“Sure you are. Now, tell me. Do you believe it’s safe enough for us to come back?”

“I can send you the jacket. It’s not a big deal.”

“Peter, stop being a troublemaker! What’s your assessment?”

“That’s not likely to happen. I do believe it’s safe for you to come home. Other than Mike, nobody, I mean nobody, has even acted suspicious or asked us questions regarding St. Paul, or you. Let me tell you what Mike has done. He pulled everyone from the police station, and

several of the sub-stations along the coast, into a secret meeting. He explained the situation and asked everyone to keep it quiet. But before he said anything, he made everyone sign nondisclosure agreements, telling them the US Attorney General would prosecute anyone who leaked any information about ours and your situation. The AG has gone above and beyond the call of duty for all of us. You could be the main attraction in the Fourth of July Parade and no one would suspect a thing. Is that enough assessment for you?”

“Yes, thanks, although we aren’t ready to return yet. We, Zoe, want to give it a little more time. Zoe is quite content here. I need to go. I’ll keep in touch. Tell Mike, I said hi. Oh, tell Maggie I plan to call her soon.”

“Will do, Chief. Tell Zoe hello for us, Goodbye.”

“Okay, goodbye.”

Ramous was relieved that life was normalizing back in the US. He hated learning Spanish and was longing for home, but contrary to how he felt, Zoe seemed happy staying in the villa. That’s what was important. It was a beautiful place on the coast of Barcelona. She loved walking through the city. They did a lot of walking.

Mel and Cat were never around. They spent most of their time traveling through the rest of Europe.

Ramous met Mark and Dee, who were using the names, Alberto, and Angelia Calderon. They spent a lot of time together finding their way around Spain. Alberto, Mark, owned a car, Ramous did not.

Ramous enjoyed spending his afternoons on the deck gazing at the sailboats slipping across the turquoise waters of the Mediterranean, with their large beautiful colorful sails catching the wind. It was an inspiring sight, making him wish he knew how to sail.

Zone normally joined him, but that afternoon, she brought him an ice-cold glass of tea, kissed him on the head, and returned to the kitchen. She was preparing dinner for Mel and Cat, who were returning from Rome.

After the two arrived, and they finished all the hugs and kisses, the four of them sat for dinner.

After about ten minutes of small talk, Mel said to Zoe, “Hon, we saw Art in Rome.”

“Art? Why was he in Rome?”

“We don’t know. When we saw it was him, we left quickly before he found us out. I’m sure he was on a

mission. He was with four French and Italian diplomats. They spoke French and Italian, and he was acting as an interpreter, which is one of his covers.”

“Are you certain he wasn’t just traveling?”

Cat answered, “No, we’re sure it was him, and he was undercover. We sat three tables over from him. They were discussing politics, and there was money exchanging hands.”

Zoe asked, “Did he have a team?”

Mel answered, “We don’t know. We didn’t wait to find out. If he saw us, who knows what kind of trouble that might have brought.”

They spent the rest of dinner trying to figure out why the Gens were still involved with foreign operations.

Before they finished dinner, Cat said, “We need to find out. This makes me worried that St. Paul hasn’t ceased foreign operations. St. Paul is an expert at concealing their activities, even in the face of government intrusion. We need to contact Art, by someone we can trust, but someone he doesn’t know. Maybe we can kidnap him and interrogate him.”

The three looked at Ramous.

He had his face in his pasta, and with noodles falling from his mouth to his plate, he looked up to see all three of them staring at him. He knew when they said someone who doesn't know Art; they meant him. Did they say kidnap?

After ten minutes of intense discussion and several repeated phrases, "I won't do it," they all agreed Ramous would do it. They decided to leave for Rome on Monday, with Mark and Dee in tow.

They hoped to find Art around or near the French Consulate. They also knew if he was with a team, they would be watching his back, so they needed to find him when he was alone. Once he was alone, Mel could come up from behind and grab him, using chloroform to knock him out. Ramous was not to confront him because he was not strong enough to wrestle a Gen.

Cat warned Ramous that if Art even got a glimpse of him coming after him, he'd be dead very quickly. Instead, they needed another Gen of equal strength to do it.

Zoe turned to Ramous, "This is a secret, Ram, and please keep it to yourself. Chloroform can knock a Gen out before it even covers the nose. Some Gens will pass out by the time it gets within a foot of their nose."

“That’s good to know, Hon. That’s good to know.”

Cat reached for the back of his neck. Ramous turned his head just in time to catch her. Things got awkward until they all laughed, although Ramous’s laugh was just a little forced.

They packed up Sunday night and met at the train station early the next morning. It was a twenty-two-hour ride to Rome.

Ramous and Zoe spent most of the trip taking in the sites and making small talk. It was a beautiful trip, especially when traveling in the countryside.

Mark and Dee joined them on and off throughout the trip. Mark had a cold and took several naps.

Mel also slept most of the way while Cat spent her time reading romance novels and flirting with a guy from Canada.

All of them spent the evening in the dining car speculating about Art and why he might be in Rome. Mel said, “Perhaps, he was freelancing for the French government. There’s a lot of money in the spy business.”

No one gave a reasonable answer, just a lot of questions and speculation.

First thing, after arriving in Rome, they checked into a hotel across from the French Consulate.

Second, Mark grabbed a taxi to find and rent a seven-passenger van.

Third, he went looking for a soundproof space to rent. He found a recording studio that was not being used, and perfect for what they planned. He rented it for a week.

That evening, they ate dinner at the little restaurant next to the hotel lobby.

Mel turned to Zoe and asked, “Did you bring a PPE, Sweetie?”

“No, I did not. I don’t want him to get hurt. Let’s let him go if it gets to where we have to use weapons. I’ll not be any part of harming Art or his team.”

Mel was happy she didn’t bring one and particularly satisfied no one was to get hurt. “Gens need to look out for one another, even in situations like this.”

Then Mark asked Mel, “Do you have the chloroform?”

“Yes, it’s secured in my pocket. Should I pull it out and open it, test it?”

No one said anything further. After dinner, Ramous, Zoe, and Mel went for a walk. It was evening and dark enough for them to walk around the consulate without being noticed.

The rest returned to their rooms to retire for the night.

Cat was reading a romance novel and wanted to finish before she went to sleep. When she told the others, Mel shook her head and said, “Don’t let your hormones get the best of you, my dear.”

It was a warm evening and there were only scattered tourists walking about. The three of them spent forty-five minutes walking around the neighborhood when Mel recognized a young woman. It wasn’t Art, but one of his team. It was Jena 201.

Once they saw her, Mel said, “I’m going to take her. She can give us as much information as Art. Also, she and Dee are good friends.”

Jena was the only other person on the street. So, Mel and Zoe crossed the street as Ramous confronted her asking, “Do you speak English?”

“Yes, what can I do for you?”

“I’m lost. I’m looking for the hotel Navona.”

“Wow, you certainly are lost!”

Before Jena could say anything else, Mel and Zoe came up behind her. Mel placed the cloth full of chloroform in front of her face. Her knees buckled, as did Mel’s.

Mel knocked Jena and herself out. She dropped the bottle of chloroform on the sidewalk. Zoe ran across the street so she wouldn’t pass out. Ramous kicked the broken glass to the curb. The chloroform dissipated and Zoe returned across the street. Fortunately, it all took place next to a bench on the sidewalk.

Ramous and Zoe placed the two women on the bench and leaned them next to one another, so they appeared to be sitting upright. Zoe called Mark and explained to him what they did.

Mark brought the van around, and he, Dee, and Cat helped put the women in the back.

When they got to the recording studio, they placed Mel on an old couch in the waiting room. They chained, handcuffed, and tied Jena to a heavy metal chair in one of the soundproof rooms.

It was almost the next morning before Mel and Jena came to.

Ramous said, “Man, that stuff really does a number on you guys.”

When he said so, Cat reached around to the back of his neck again.

He shouted, “Stop that!”

Zoe and Dee blacked out the window, looking into the sound room so they could sit behind and listen as Ramous interrogated Jena. Also, they found a set of headphones he could wear, so they could give him questions to ask.

Ramous took the headphones off as soon as he entered the room. He knew what he’d say without anyone’s help.

When Jena came to, she looked at herself, her restraints, the room, and Ramous.

The first thing she said, “By the restraints you have used, I assume you already know who and what I am. Why have you taken me?”

Ramous answered, “I’m not your enemy. I’m here to help you if that’s possible.”

“What do you mean, help me?”

Ramous liked Jena, “Your right, Jena. I know you’re a Second Gen working for the St. Paul Corporation, right?”

She looked at him and said, “I don’t have a clue what you’re talking about. You might as well kill me because that’s the last thing I will say to you!”

“Okay, let me talk. I’m trying to find out if St. Paul is still using the Gens for international operations, and I’m trying to find out so I can help you if you need it. You’re part of a team of thirteen. Art is your logistics and team leader, and I’m not concerned about what you’re doing here. I can help you get away from St. Paul. That’s why I took you. If I’m wrong, I’ll put you out again and return you to the street I took you from. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Jena stared at Ramous. “Let’s say you’re right and I want to change my life. If I were working for such a company or government, how could you get me out?”

With that, Ramous called Mark in.

Jena took one look at Mark and she broke down crying. She was trying so hard to get out of her bindings, but was unable. She said several things to Mark in French.

Mark released Jena from her restraints. She stood up and hugged him, all the while sobbing.

Mark turned to Ramous and said, “She wants out. They all want out. We need to help them.”

Right after, Dee walked in. Ramous thought Jena might pass out as she reached over to hug Dee.

Ramous went into the control room and joined the others. When he entered the room, Zoe, Mel, and Cat were discussing whether they could trust Jena.

None of the three wanted to expose themselves yet. Mark and Dee knew Jena well, and at least they believe she wouldn't expose them, but the rest were not as confident since they didn't know her well, no more than the occasional hello.

Jena spent the next hour bringing Mark and Dee up to speed on what was going on with the St. Paul Corporation and their assignment by the US government.

She explained they were no longer working for St. Paul, but were, in fact, working for the CIA. It was worse for them now than when they operated under St. Paul.

She said, “We traded one evil for another. The US government has moved all the Gens to Guantanamo Bay and put everyone under lock and key. They only let us out when we go on operations. It was much worse for the remaining First Gens. The US government was experimenting on them, trying to figure out how they were created. Most of the scientists who worked for St. Paul went into hiding, so government scientists were starting from the beginning. They wired the floors in the cells they placed us in with electricity. If anyone refuses to cooperate, they electrocute them. Several times they put a bunch of us in one room and turned the power up high enough to knock us out, to show who was in charge. If we don’t return from an operation, they will electrocute another Gen in our place. They have murdered four Gens during the last three months. We don’t have a choice. Mark, Dee, you heard about the explosion in Seattle, right?”

Mark answered, “Yes. They killed a lot of Gens in the explosion.”

“Mark, seventy-five First Gens turned themselves into the Seattle office after St. Paul killed Dania. That office called in two hundred Second Gens to help transport them to a facility in Peru. Once all the Second Gens were in the building, the First Gens set off bombs. They used some very powerful explosives, and the explosion was big enough to view from space. Afterward, we were told they killed one hundred twenty-five, Second Gens, when in fact two hundred and six were killed. There are only fifty-two of us left, fifty-three counting Dee.

“When the criminal prosecutions of St. Paul's management were in the early stages, they sent us all to Guantanamo Bay, supposedly for our safety. That's not what happened. Once there, they brought each of us into a room and told us we would continue with our international operations. Then, they showed us a video of Harry and Ellen, being electrocuted. They put both in a small cell and electrocuted them. They told us that's what will happen to us, or our friends, if we resisted or refused to cooperate. I told them it was against the law to murder us any longer. That's when they told me they had the patents and our original birth certificates and could do with us whatever they wanted.”

Dee said, “This isn't good!”

Mark asked Jena, “What can we do?”

“Well, the patents are in Washington, and we’re the property of whoever holds those patents. We need to get them so they can’t just kill us whenever they choose.”

Dee said, “You guys need to come with us. You’ll be safe with us.”

Jena answered, “If we leave with you now, they will kill another in our place. We can’t take that chance.”

Mark and Dee agreed Jena should return to her operation, and inform Art.

Before Jena left, Dee gave her six phone numbers and said, “Do not call these numbers with a company phone. You must use a burner for each call. It’s our relay system in New York. It will only accept a phone number once. If you try a second time, it will not receive the call. Once the system answers, you must enter 7777 to leave a message and a code for our response. You select the code and next time you call, enter the 7777 and wait for a bell. If there’s no bell, it means we have not responded yet, but once you hear it, put your code in and you will get an answer from us. That’s the only way you can contact us, and no one can trace it.”

Mark drove her back to the street where they took her and told her they would be in contact, and then he returned to the studio and picked up the group. They packed up and caught the train back to Spain.

Before everyone went their separate ways, they agreed to meet the next night. They needed to figure out how to return to the US and find the patents. Without them, the CIA couldn't kill Gens, nor experiment on them anymore.

Ramous was angry. It was unjust to treat anyone as the CIA was treating the Gens. He worried about Zoe too. Although Gens were grown in labs, they were still human beings, life. God cared for them as well.

The next morning, Ramous took a burner and called Mike.

“Hello.”

“Hello, Mike. I'll make this brief in case you're being monitored. I have learned the remaining Gens, both First and Second, are being held at Guantanamo Bay and still being used for international operations. What do you know about this?”

“I don’t know anything about it. They were supposed to retire, paid a pension, and given new identities. I need to look into this.”

“They are being forced to perform their old duties in espionage. We found a group in Rome working for the CIA. They informed us they’re being forced under penalty of death to continue with those operations. So far, the US government has killed four Second Gens to enforce their point. Two things we need to investigate. First, we need to find out who kidnapped the Gens. Second, we need to get our hands on those patents. Someone in the CIA is holding them and using them to secure the Gens cooperation. Do what you can to resolve those questions so we can determine what we need to do to help them.”

“All right, Ram. I’ll get on it right now! Goodbye.”

Mike called Jerome. “Hello, this is Jerome Waters. Can I help you?”

“Tell me, Jerome, what’s going on with the Gens? I thought you were trustworthy!”

“Hi Mike, what are you talking about?”

Mike explained what he heard from Ramous and was not polite about it. It upset Jerome by what Mike told

him. He spent the next ten minutes convincing Mike he knew only what Mike had just told him. He was furious.

Jerome was upper management in the St. Paul Corporation and did the bulk of the work with law enforcement in bringing its managers to justice. Once Mike finished telling him what Ramous said, Jerome knew what and who he was dealing with. He never, since he first became an informant, trusted Whiteside, and became suspicious of the line of questioning used by the head of the DOJ and CIA. They asked him questions about how St. Paul kept them in line and other things related to the Gens lifestyles. Apparently, the current CIA Director wasn't willing to give up those assets. That wasn't right, and he would force the government to follow through on their promises.

Jerome called Silver Durant. "Hello, Robbins, Durant, and James, how may I direct your call?"

"Hello, can I speak to Silver Durant please?"

"May I ask, who's calling?"

"Jerome Waters."

"One second, please."

"Hello Jerome, what can I do for you?"

“I need your help, Silver. We need to approach the federal government regarding the Gens.”

Jerome told him what the federal government promised the Gens and what they did to the Gens.

Robbins, Durant, and James were one of the top law firms in the nation. The partner Durant was, for the last fifteen years, under retainer to the St. Paul Corporation. He and Jerome became good friends during that time. In fact, Durant was instrumental, working behind the scenes in prosecuting the corporation.

Once he learned about the Gens and what St. Paul was involved with, he couldn't let it continue. So, he ended his relationship with St. Paul and went to work with Jerome to confront them. Silver was a good man.

Silver made connections in the AG's office while they prosecuted the St. Paul Corporation. He created the legal paperwork that gave the Gens their freedom. The CIA was breaking the law by using the Gens in such a manner.

Silver cautioned Jerome. “If they're willing to break the law like this, we must tread carefully. Let me find out what I can and I'll call you back. Jerome, this will be the last call I accept from you using my office number. I'll get a burner and we can keep in contact through burners,

because I want no one listening in on us in case my inquiry brings unwanted attention. Call me from the payphone on the first floor of your building. Give me the number, and I'll call you back on the same payphone with a burner and give you the burner number."

Jerome called Silver and gave him the number.

"Thanks, Jerome. I'll call this number tomorrow at 1 PM. If you don't answer, I'll try every hour on the hour afterward until we connect."

"Okay. I'll talk to you tomorrow, at 1 PM."

"All right. That should give me enough time to find out what's happening,"

After they hung up, Silver made a call to the USAG's office. He spoke with the assistant AG. He knew William Mercer, but wasn't sure if he could trust him, so he kept his inquiry vague.

"Hi, Will. How are you?"

"I'm good. How are you, Silver? Are you staying out of trouble?"

"A lawyer staying out of trouble? Is that even possible? I'm always standing on the edge of trouble. Will, I was just thinking about the St. Paul Corporation and was

wondering about the Gens. I've heard nothing about them since St. Paul's troubles began. They were my main concern for getting involved, and I would have expected to have heard something about them by now, at least regarding their outcome. What can you tell me?"

"Jerome, I handed that over to one of my subordinates, Mason Parks. I'll tell you what, I'll talk with him and have him call you back, or I'll call you back and give you an update. Now you mentioned it; I'm curious myself. Everything related to them has become quiet. Let me call him."

Silver didn't tell William everything Jerome told him since he was trying to find out without making a full revelation. He expected that information would come out when Will spoke with Parks.

He didn't go home that night. Instead, he stayed in a hotel. If William was involved, he could be in danger. It was not safe for him. Fortunately, he never married and had no children to worry about. That made him more comfortable, even though he sensed matters regarding the Gens had taken a turn for the worse.

After checking into the hotel, under an assumed name, he found a pharmacy to buy a couple burners. Again,

if William was involved with what happened to the Gens, his phone wouldn't be safe to use.

Afterward, he called his secretary, telling her he wouldn't be in the next day and when Mr. Waters called to forward him to the number of the burner he was using at the moment. He also told her if Mr. Mercer called to direct him to another number. After those calls, he would discard both burners and use the third, giving its number to Jerome.

The next morning Mike received a call from Ramous.

"Hello Mike, what have you found out?"

"I haven't found out anything yet. I'm waiting for Jerome to call me back."

"All right, I'll call you later."

"Okay, Ram. Talk to you in a while."

It was after seven in the evening in Spain when Ramous called Mike.

That evening, dinner was unusually quiet as everyone was engrossed in thought about what to do next. Until they heard from Mike, they couldn't make any plans.

After dinner, Ramous and Zoe went for a walk on the beach. It was a warm evening and, again, several sailboats were racing out in the bay. They found a comfortable spot to sit in the sand and watch.

“Ram, I want to help my friends, and I’m so eager to do something. I don’t like just sitting and waiting. In the past, I have spent so much time doing exactly that, but this is different. I can’t imagine what they’re going through.”

“Well, until Mike calls back, there’s nothing we can do except get ourselves into trouble. If they find out about us, we’re all dead. It’s that simple. I don’t mind risking my life, but I can’t bear to imagine anything happening to the rest of you, particularly you. Without you, I’m lost.”

“I know, Hon. I hate waiting is all.”

They sat on the beach all night. Under different circumstances, it would have been a warm romantic walk.

When they got back to the villa, Cat and Mel were sitting on the patio around a fire pit. Ramous and Zoe took a seat on a small rattan couch next to the fire. No one said anything. Cat and Mel went to bed, leaving the two by themselves.

Ramous couldn't sleep and was waiting until after 5 AM to call Mike back.

At around midnight, Zoe went to bed.

She kissed him goodnight and said, "Wake me after you have talked with Mike. I'd like to know what he found out."

"Okay, Hon."

The secretary answered, "Hello, Robbins, Durant, and James, how can I direct your call?"

William asked, "Is Mr. Durant in?"

"May I ask who's calling, please?"

"This is William Mercer with the USAG's office. He's expecting my call."

"Yes, Mr. Mercer. Mr. Durant has given me a number for you to call him."

She gave him the number and hung up.

He called Durant.

"Hello, Will, what did you find out?"

"I've found out a lot, most of it was disturbing. When I spoke with Mason Parks, he acted as if he didn't have a clue what I was talking about. I threatened him with

termination if he didn't respond accordingly. He finally told me where I could find the files on the matter. I sent my secretary to retrieve them. Once I got them, I went through them. They were redacted so heavily I could barely read them. All the files related to the Gens were gone. I'm concerned."

By the tone in William's voice, and the way he presented his findings, Silver knew he could trust him.

"This is what's happening, Will. The Gens are being held at Guantanamo Bay and forced to work on international operations by the CIA. They are being forced to operate under penalty of death. The CIA has murdered four of them already. In addition, they're experimenting on the First Gens to pick up where St. Paul left off. I'm certain Whiteside is involved, but I didn't tell you this at first because I wasn't sure who I could trust."

"Silver, I became suspicious of Whiteside in the beginning. He has always come across as dishonest. Just call it a gut feeling. I'll find a judge I can present this information to. Hopefully, we can resolve this issue without too much trouble."

"One more thing, Will. There were patents and birth certificates for each Gen, and because of those patents, no

Gen has a legal right to life. Anyone who has them has the legal right to terminate them without facing prosecution. We need to find those patents and destroy them without the CIA finding out. Otherwise, I suspect they will kill them all before we can resolve this.”

“All right, I’m sure the AG will support us. He can and will encourage anyone with those documents to turn them over to our office. Then, we will go after Whiteside and the CIA to get them to release the Gens and force them to follow the court’s ruling. I’m certain the AG is unaware of what has taken place and will fix it. Once I get those documents in my hand, I’ll destroy them on the spot.”

Silver was satisfied with what William told him. Also, he was relieved William proved himself trustworthy. At the same time, he remained nervous because he didn’t believe the CIA would give up easily.

Silver called Jerome and explained to him what William Mercer told him.

Jerome, too, was happy about the information. Both would wait to find out if William and the USAG followed through before they did a victory dance.

Jerome called Mike and gave him the update. None of them were without concern, but at least, as far as they understood, it was being dealt with.

At 5 AM, Ramous called Mike back. Mike relayed everything Jerome told him. He also expressed concern about whether it will all come together as planned. After all, they were dealing with the most clandestine department in the federal government, and the world.

He and Mike talked for an hour. Afterward, Ramous went to bed.

Contact

That morning, Zoe called Mark and Dee to invite them over for brunch, telling them they had an update from the States. Ramous wanted to tell everyone at the same time what he and Mike talked about so he wouldn't have to repeat it to everyone.

Once they gathered around the table, Ramous relayed the information Mike gave him. They were only slightly relieved, and it was cautionary. He told them the inquiry went all the way to the USAG's office, and they hoped to force the CIA to release the Gens. In the meantime, they planned to look for the patents and birth certificates.

The next week rolled by at a slow pace. Cat and Mel went to Salamanca to visit a few historical sites. They figured just sitting around the villa was counterproductive.

Ramous and Zoe spent their time on a nearby beach.

Zoe asked, "How long do you think it's going to take?"

"That was a loaded question. How long will what take?"

“You know. How long do you think it will take for all of this to be sorted out, free the Gens, and find the patents. You know Mike better than I do. Do you think he will succeed?”

“I don’t know, Hon. So far, he’s come through for us as many times as we’ve asked him, but this time, I just don’t know the answer. I do know how happy I am that you’re safe. I’m happy that I’m sitting here with a beautiful woman, on a beautiful beach, watching beautiful sailing boats crisscrossing a beautiful blue-green bay. What more could I ask for at this moment? It’s going to work out, Sweetheart. I don’t know how long it will take, but I believe we have the right people on the job.”

“I can’t imagine what my friends and the rest of the Gens are going through. I wish I could say I was happy right now. And if I were, you’d be the best part of my happiness.”

Ramous smiled and kiss her. “It’s going to work out. Trust me.”

On the seventh day, one of the burners Dee was holding rang. The caller followed the process given to Jena.

Dee and Mark contacted Zoe and told her she'd received a call. Everyone met at the villa, so Zoe and Ramous could hear the message.

First thing, Dee said, "It's legitimate, and the person followed the correct process."

Then she played the message, "Hello, this is team leader Connie 9. I have been in contact with Jena 201. She told me the process to get this message to those who can help us. We are in Madrid for the CIA. We expect to wrap this operation up in one week. If you want to meet up, please respond. I believe I have important information for you. Let me say this until then. Things are not what they seem. Code 1411."

The group responded and decided to meet with Connie's team two days later. That allowed them time to find Mel and Cat so they could get involved.

Once they contacted the two, everyone agreed to meet at the Museo de Historia, on Calle Fuencarral. Dee relayed the message to Connie, who responded with approval.

The group met early the day before in Madrid. It was cloudy and raining. Mel and Cat spent the day doing tourist things, mostly shopping.

Ramous mentioned to Mark, saying, “How they could be so nonchalant.”

Mark answered, “Those two are among the most courageous people I have ever met. If they were in a firefight, they wouldn’t have a problem stopping to look at a piece of art, or take in the sites as the bullets flew. That’s why they could accomplish such a plan to take all that money and property right under Israel’s and America’s nose. Except for Zoe, I don’t know anyone who can do things like that. They are both wild spirits as best I can explain it. But, in the past, your wife used to put them to shame. She must really love you, because she has tempered a lot. Honestly, I’m surprised. You’re a lucky man, Ramous. I’m not saying Dee and I don’t have a similar relationship, but if not for the circumstances, she might leave. That’s my own opinion, because on the inside, I’m insecure.”

Ramous knew better than to reply. He wasn’t getting in the middle of anyone’s relationship. He knew what Mark said wasn’t the case, just Mark’s insecurity. Ramous found it interesting how the leader who managed the Second Gens, being so insecure, made little sense. It was an awkward moment.

It was decided that Mark was to meet with Connie the next day at 2 PM at a small outdoor bistro next to the museum.

Connie wasn't told who she was meeting, only that she'd recognize them. When she approached the bistro, she became faint at the sight of Mark sitting at the small table with two cups of coffee. She walked up to him, and as he stood, she grabbed him and held on tight.

She shouted, "I thought you were dead! It's so good to see you alive."

"It's good to see you too, Hon. How are you? Why are you here? What can you tell me, and how can we help?"

"I'm not so good. I'm sure you know that already. My team and I are here looking for Congressman Canon. We're supposed to find him and terminate him. I don't know why. It looks like he was a step ahead of us. We found his apartment, but it was empty. We think he moved out this morning."

"Canon is here? How long has he been in Spain?"

“No clue. It doesn’t matter, he’s gone now, and I don’t know where. We’ll stick around for another two weeks in case he comes back.”

“I wish we knew he was here. We probably could have taken him out.”

“Yes, I’m sure you would have. Last week I saw Jena and Art, during an operational meeting at the bay, Art passed me information so I could get in touch with you. We don’t have problems getting messages to one another. That’s how I knew how to contact you. Fortunate for us, the guards at the bay must have IQs around 50. I’m surprised they hired them as guards. It would only take one idiot to push the wrong button and we’d all be dead. We’re taking bets on which guard will kill us, out of ignorance or stupidity, first. Anyway, we’re desperate to know more about what’s taking place outside of the bay, and what’s being done to get us out of there.”

“Yes. We contacted the USAG’s office to get you guys out of there, and to force the government to comply with the previous court orders. Has anything changed at the bay? Is there anything you can tell me?”

“Nothing has changed much, and we’ve heard rumors about a lawyer who contacted the AG’s office, but

the talk is they will move us before they let us go. We don't believe the CIA will let us go, Mark. We heard they're planning to move us to a compound in Saudi Arabia, but it will take some time to do that. They can't move us all at once. They'll move us a dozen at a time, because if we're all out of our cells at the same time, we can and will escape. You need to get in contact with your sources in the US and tell them what they're planning before they start moving us. You are the only person who can help us. We don't know who we can trust, and those in charge of the prison won't hesitate for one second to kill all of us. If we aren't any value to them, there's no need for us."

"I'm sorry. I'll get in contact with the US today and find out what went wrong. They should have been releasing everyone by now."

Connie stood up, as did Mark. They hugged one another, and she walked away, disappearing into the crowd.

When Mark returned to the hotel, he explained everything Connie told him. It concerned everyone that somebody in the line of trust was not so trustworthy. Every one of them assumed it was Mercer, the assistant AG.

Upon returning to the villa in Barcelona, Ramous immediately called Mike.

“Hello.”

“Hello, Mike. Why are the Gens still at Guantanamo? They should have released them by now.”

“Ram, we have met resistance from the CIA and DOJ. They killed William Mercer in an auto accident last night, a suspicious accident. He was a good man, who rustled the wrong feathers, and the CIA or DOJ took him out. The AG is angry and wants heads to roll. He’s also suspicious of both organizations. Let’s treat this as just a bump in the road, Ram.”

“What are you talking about, bump in the road? That makes no sense! Mike! Whose side are you on? Today, we met with a Gen who’s operating here in Spain. She’s telling us they’re getting ready to move all the Gens to Saudi Arabia. That doesn’t sound like things are going as planned, or a bump in the road!”

“I didn’t know. Let me call Jerome and find out what he knows. I’m confident no one in the chain knew about that.”

“Well, we’re dealing with the CIA. Can you call him now and call me back? We can’t let this happen, okay?”

“Yes, Ram, I’ll call him now, and call you right back.”

Ramous was so mad he couldn’t hold a conversation except to tell them Mike was looking into it.

He walked out onto the back deck and took a seat. Zoe brought him an iced tea and sat next to him. The rest followed, taking seats on the back deck.

Fifteen minutes later, Mike called back, “Ram, things are in the works. Jerome got in contact with Silver Garnet, and Silver will contact the AG. Hopefully, they can at least prevent the transfer.”

“As soon as you find out, call me back, because we’re exceeding the anxious level here.”

Mike said, “I forgot to mention, another operative was in Spain looking for Canon. We believe he was in the country somewhere. Apparently, he fled to Paris and then moved from there to Madrid. We believe he found out and left Spain this morning. We think someone alerted him. You might keep an eye out for him, in case we’re wrong about him leaving. Interestingly, it doesn’t appear he’s on the run as many believed. I’m certain he’s getting help from the US government.

“The Gen Mark met with today was also looking for him. She intended to kill him. St. Paul may be cutting some loose strings. If we had been told this earlier, Mark could have taken care of him, himself.”

“Just let everyone know that I’m on it. I’m not lollygagging around. I’m tired, but burning the candle at both ends. Talk to you later, Ram.”

Ramous relayed his conversation to the rest of the group. Everyone was dismayed at the thought of Canon being within arm’s reach and no one knew about it, although their main concern was to free the Gens. They could deal with Canon at a later time, once the Gens were free.

Silver called the AG, Arthur Moore, and explained to him what the CIA’s intentions were. Moore was already mad at the CIA and promised to put a stop to the move the next morning.

Once Moore made contact to prevent the move, the CIA went into action. If a Gen talked to the wrong people, it would be over for Whiteside. He’d be charged him with treason for the acts he forced the Gens to commit under his leadership. At 10 AM the next morning, Whiteside had all

the guards gather the Gens into a conference room. The floor had the same electric circuits laid in every cell.

Goodman wanted to kill them all, except the Saudis paid him a lot of money to have them sent to Arabia. Once transferred to Saudi Arabia, the Gens would be available to both the Saudi government and the CIA. All the Gens feared no one could help them then. The King hoped he could persuade them to perform covert acts for the country. There were other Princes, associates, and leaders the Saudis didn't like. The King hoped to deal with them quietly.

Whiteside ordered his guards to move the Gens in small groups. Holding several back to ensure the proceeding groups would comply.

It was a stroke of luck when Herman 64 noticed the switch for the electrical floor was unmanned. The news spread quickly to every Gen in the room. They took that opportunity to escape.

First, they took out the six guards and took their weapons. Six First Gens took the weapons and made their way to the switch so no one could use it. Afterward, they quickly exited the prison, forcing every guard along the way to lay their weapons down.

No one was to be killed until a First Gen, having a bout of paranoia, killed a guard. The rest of the First Gens followed suit, killing the remaining guards who got in their way.

Art tried to stop them, but they wouldn't listen to him. Afterward, he shouted, "Second Gens, move away from the First Gens!"

They followed and headed in a different direction, leaving behind the alarms, screams, and gunfire.

Although they went a different way, they knew the US would charge them for the murders of those men, just like they would the First Gens. Also, they were in Cuba. How were they going to leave the country? Where can so many Gens hide until they could get out of the country?

They needed to get off the US compound first. Afterward, they could mingle in with the citizens. Everyone spoke Spanish, so there was no problem melting in with the locals.

Once they were in a spot that allowed them at least five minutes' pause, Art explained how to get ahold of Mark. He informed them Mark was working on the outside to get them released. He gave directions and told everyone to make their way to Santiago de Cuba. It was just a little

over sixty miles away. Once there, they needed to meet up south of the town.

He told them to hang around the airport and don't crowd. When Art got there, he continued into the airport looking for a plane to steal. Instead, he found a little shop where he stole a burner phone. He had to contact Mark and find out what resources he might have to help them out, so he called the number and left the message they had escaped and needed his help to get out of Cuba.

Dee answered the cell and got Art's message. She contacted everyone and told them to meet at the villa.

Dee said, "We got a call from Art. We need to listen and do what we can to help."

She played the message, which was troubling, something unexpected.

Afterward, Mel spoke up, "We got this. There's an airport in Santiago de Cuba, and Cat and I happen to own a private 727 that can carry that many people, all the Second Gens anyway. With the new tourist laws in Cuba, we can fly in without too much trouble as wealthy European tourists."

Mark asked, “Where’s the plane and how fast can we get in the air?”

Mel answered, “The plane is in our hanger in Madrid. We can get it into the air tomorrow. The four of us are certified to fly a Boeing 727, and it’s big enough to carry everyone. Dee, Cat, and I’ll fly in and pick them up. Once they’re on board, we will take off, and if Zoe wants to go, she’s more than welcome.”

Zoe jumped in with both feet, “I want to go.”

Mel said, “We’ll leave tomorrow around noon and should be in Santiago by 4:10 AM the following morning. That means we will have to be in Madrid by 8 AM.”

Mel said to Mark, “Call Art and leave a message for them to meet us at the Santiago de Cuba airport at 4:15 AM the day after tomorrow. Give him Dee’s cell number so he can contact her in case things change.”

Mark called and left the message for Art. Once Art responded, they set the plan in motion.

Dee left a message for Connie and her team to meet Mark at the museum, after explaining what took place at the Bay.

Mel registered the plane under the name of Margret Henson. She made the proper fake identification for the name, and they had no problem getting the craft fueled or filing the flight plan to Cuba. No one asked questions, other than who was piloting the plane. Both Dee and Mel presented their licenses. From there, it was just a matter of fueling and leaving.

Mark showed up with Connie before they were escorted onto the runway, so she joined the crew.

He and Ramous watched as they took off and disappeared into the cloudy sky.

Mark said, “Those women are amazing, aren’t they?”

“Yes, they are. Did you know Mel had a plane?”

“No, but that doesn’t stop me from thinking they’re remarkable. As far as Mel or Cat are concerned, you can never tell what they have up their sleeves. They have always been full of surprises. I can imagine Zoe thinking them a handful.”

Ramous agreed. Still, they worried about them should they run into trouble.

Once in the air, Dee received a call from Art. The Gens had found a small airport outside of Santiago where they could land a large aircraft. It's overgrown but would be better than using the main airport where the United States might have placed operatives.

Art asked, "What size plane are you flying?"

Dee answered, "We are flying a 727. Can we land there?"

"Yes, the drug cartels have huge airstrips."

"Okay, light it up at 4:05 AM. Now, give me the coordinates."

"Dee, get as close to the runway as you can before deviating from your flight plan. Otherwise, the US Air Force may be sent to intercept."

"Okay, Art, I have the coordinates now, and we will meet you at 4:10 AM, provided no wind resistance."

"Everyone will be there. We are all looking forward to seeing you. We all owe you big time. There's one more issue, Dee."

"What's that?"

"We came across a cell of Third Gens. There were six. Somebody let them out, and they followed us. We can't

leave them behind. They will tell the military how we got out of Cuba, which will cause problems for everyone. We won't kill them. That makes us no better than the CIA. What should we do with them? If it were up to me, I'd bring them along and deal with the consequences rather than leave them behind. That's my opinion. Please advise me."

"No worries, Art. We all need to look out for one another no matter what Gen we are. We will deal with them once we're back in the air. You know, we can always toss them out in the middle of the ocean, right?"

"Dee! Are you serious?"

"No, of course not. We can deal with them."

The plane arrived three minutes late, and they had to hurry because deviating from their flight plan meant Cuba might come looking for them.

Once everyone was on board and in the air, Mel contacted the Santiago Airport stating the flight had to turn around due to a stowaway. She explained how a young teenage girl hid on board and was just found by a crew member.

The controller asked, “Do you have enough fuel to return to your origin?”

Dee answered, “Yes, we’re good to go. Thank you, Santiago, we hope to return soon. Good evening to you.”

“Good day,” came the response.

They were home free, provided the US didn’t come after them. They were excited and confident the mission succeeded.

Art entered the cockpit and asked, “Any plans on how we’ll find places to stay?”

Cat smiled and answered, “No problem, Art. We have a vineyard in Tuscany that’s vacant. It used to be a large bed-and-breakfast and can handle everyone. You will become employees of the vineyard until we can figure this out. Art, here’s what you need to do. Once everyone disembarks from the plane, divide up into small groups. We will get each group to the train station and provide everyone with enough Euros to get them to Tuscany. I’ll also give you enough money to live until we can get there. We’ll wait a week before we come to be sure everything settles down. When traveling to Tuscany, stagger yourselves so you’re not all on the same train at the same time. You don’t want to draw attention to yourselves. Make

the groups smaller than ten. It would be better if everyone paired up as couples and went two by two, keeping a low profile. When you get there, you'll find a key to the hotel under a planter at the corner of the hotel. Once you're there, you can figure out how to get the Gens situated. Did you get all that?"

"Yes."

"Okay, now go relay that information to the rest."

Once Art left the cockpit, Mel came over the intercom, "Sorry friends, we didn't supply the craft with food. We were in too big a hurry, but we should be in Madrid in seven hours. Try to get some sleep. Art will explain what you need to do when we get there. It's good to see all of you."

Cat left the cockpit to speak with the Third Gens. They needed to know if they will be trouble. She found them sitting by themselves in the back of the plane.

She approached and asked, "Which of you is the leader?"

A young, tall, handsome man stood up and responded, "I am, and my name is Matthew."

“Okay, Matthew, how come you were at the bay, under lock and key?”

“We were there because we refused to perform certain medical procedures.”

“I will ask you upfront. Are you going to be a problem? What do you plan to do once we land?”

“Like the other Gens on this plane, we want a fresh start. We want out from under St. Paul. We want our freedom,” he paused, looked at the other third Gens, and then said, “Mam, we’re exhausted. They had us up for the last three days straight. Can we discuss this later, please?”

Three of them were nodding off already. “Of course, I’m sorry. Please rest and we can continue this after we land.” She felt compassion for them and left them so they could sleep.

Two hours before arrival, Dee called Mark and asked him to withdraw two hundred thousand Euros. Afterward, he was to rent two fifteen-passenger vans and meet them at the hanger.

Mark and Ramous stopped at the bank where Mark withdrew the money. A short taxi ride and they were at a car rental business where he rented the two vans.

Before they left for the airport, Mark said, “Ramous, this kind of activity would get you noticed in the US, but in Europe no one even pays attention. Honestly, I believe they don’t care.”

Ramous just nodded his head.

Once in Madrid, the plane taxied into their private hanger. When the plane came to a stop and the hanger doors were closed, Mark and Ramous rolled a ramp up to the plane’s hatch. Everyone poured out of the plane and walked around stretching, but when they recognized Mark, they mobbed him, hugging him and shaking his hand. Everyone was excited to see him.

They ushered the six Third Gens into a small office because they didn’t want to reveal their plans to them yet.

Mel stood up on the ramp and shouted, “Listen up! The train leaves for Rome every three hours, so we will send one van every three hours to the train station and will deliver you one hour before each train. I know every one of you can find your way around, so we will drop you at the station. You need to break up into groups of six to ten individuals, starting with group one, group two and so on. The odd groups will purchase tickets for Rome, and the even groups will buy tickets to Tuscany. However, the odd

groups will not buy tickets to Tuscany until they reach Rome.”

Mel had the Gens stand by their group, and then she identified the leader of each group. She moved from one group to another when she could break from all the hugging.

Mel shouted again, “Art’s in the office making maps to the vineyard in Tuscany. Get one from him. It’s a twenty-minute walk from the station to the vineyard. Study the maps. I don’t want you taking them with you and don’t approach the vineyard in large groups. Understand, you need to pretend you’re working your way through hostile territory. If possible, blend in with tourist groups going in the same direction. I doubt anyone will look for you here, but we don’t want to take any chances or make a spectacle of ourselves.”

The first group got into Mark’s van and they were off. He was back within an hour and two hours later, the second group got into Ramous’ van. Only Ramous didn’t remember the way to the train station from the airport. They all laughed at him; Zoe drove the first group.

At the end of the day, after all the Second Gens were on their way, Dee and Mel cleaned the plane. The other four went into the office to talk with the Third Gens.

Mark asked, “We don’t know a lot about you Third Gens, other than you’re trained in the medical field. How did you end up at the bay?”

Matthew answered, “We have already answered your question, but I’ll tell you again. We refused to perform the medical procedures and research required by our supervisors. So, they put us there. I suspect they planned to terminate us before long.”

Ramous asked, “I’d like to know why you refuse to perform those duties? There must have been a reason.”

“I was sitting at lunch one day when a young woman left a book on her table. When she left, I picked it up to give it back, but I didn’t see what direction she went. Then, I returned to my table and opened the book to find out what it was about. I figure it was her technical book, and it would give me an idea of where to find her. Once I started reading it, I couldn’t put it down. I read the whole book that day and reread it the next day. After reading, I felt something I’d never experienced before. It gave me new insights about right and wrong, as well as conviction. I

didn't know what it was for a while after reading, but now I do. It was a powerful sadness for the things I was doing for St. Paul. To put it succinctly, I found life; I found Christ. I gave the book to Ryan. He read it and came to the same conclusion, as did the rest of my team here."

Ramous asked, "Are you referring to the Bible?"

"Yes. It was the Bible. We didn't understand too much at first, but we knew we couldn't continue what we were doing for St. Paul. So, we refused. Then, they put us in a deep hole, prison, for two years. Three months ago, they moved us to the bay."

Mark asked, "It's my understanding you're highly trained in medical research and procedures. Are you able to live a normal life?"

"Certainly, we didn't live at the facility. We had apartments and enjoyed all the things most normal people enjoy. We will have no problem making it on our own."

Cat asked, "Did you hear the instructions we gave to the other Gens?"

"Yes, we heard the instructions, she was yelling, and we can follow through. The work we performed took us all over the world. We traveled all the time. I speak

forty-seven languages. Rebecca speaks fifty-three, so we're accustomed to blending in and getting around."

The four of them left the room to discuss what they should do. They were confident the six of them wouldn't be a problem.

When Dee and Mel finished cleaning the plane, they took one van back and returned it. With the other one, they took the Third Gens to the train station and dropped them off the next morning, so they could join the others in Tuscany.

Afterward, they dropped off the second van and headed back to Barcelona. There was a sense of accomplishment and concern at the same time. They discussed the Third Gens all the way back to the villa.

Later in the afternoon, Ramous received a call from Mike.

Mike said, "Ram, there has been an accident. I'm not sure how to tell you this, so I'm just saying it straight up. I heard from Jerome just ten minutes ago. He told me all the Gens are gone, they're dead."

"What do you mean, Mike?"

“I don’t have all the details, but I’ll tell you what I know. I’m just sick to my stomach. The Gens, both First and Second, broke out of the bay. They killed seven guards and made their way to the port on the bay there. They stole a navy vessel and headed out to sea. It was a gunboat carrying ammunition and fuel. Fifty miles out, two F16s intercepted them, telling them to turn around. Instead of turning around, they fired two fifty-calibers at the planes. They gave the pilots the go-ahead to sink the ship. The blast was so big it nearly knocked the planes out of the air. No one could have survived such an explosion, Ram. The ship was in six thousand fathoms of water. There will be no recovery, nor media response. They will keep it quiet. Please, tell Zoe, Mel, and Cat I’m so sorry.”

“I need time, and they will need time to digest this. I’ll tell them, and get back to you the day after tomorrow, okay?”

“All right, I’ll talk to you then, goodbye.”

Ramous was sad for the First Gens, but he was at the same time happy for the Second Gens, and the Third. When he told the others, they were both sad and happy. Zoe, Mel, and Cat cried for losing the First Gens. It didn’t

matter; it was painful even if it was the First Gens. The rest of the day turned out to be a mix of emotions.

Dee called Art and told him what happened. He thought they brought it on themselves. Nonetheless, he was sad for them, but understood how it paved the way for their freedom. No one would look for them now, not in Europe anyway.

Freedom

One week later, Mark, Dee, Ramous, and Zoe caught the train to Tuscany. Again, Ramous and Zoe spent the trip site seeing and making small talk, often joined by Mark and Dee. Mel and Cat followed two days later.

Once in Tuscany, they made the twenty-minute walk up to the vineyard. Upon arriving, they saw a group of Gens out working in the fields. They were clearing the fields from years of neglect. The rest were busy performing maintenance on the rest of the property. Everybody looked like construction workers. They were supposed to be looking and acting like tourists.

It didn't take five minutes before Zoe turned to Ramous. "This place is so beautiful. I want to live here. I can imagine us sitting every evening on the patio, looking over the hillside and the fields as the sun sets. We can grow old and senile here, together."

"Do Gens go senile? I thought they just went crazy. Yes, this vineyard is beautiful, but so is the Oregon coast."

“I don’t know if I’d call it crazy, but I guess we will find out. Do you imagine we will move back to Oregon? It’s becoming a distant memory to me. Can’t we visit once a year? I’m positive Peter and Emily will take good care of the Beach Comber.”

“Maybe we could stay here for half a year and the other half in Oregon, who knows? I guess anything can happen between now and that decision. Either place doesn’t matter as long as we’re happy. We’d have to run it by Mel and Cat before we can even make that kind of decision. What if they want to keep this property for themselves?”

She stared at Ramous, smiling, “I’ve already taken care of it.”

“Oh, you did, did you?”

“Yes, it’s ours already.”

The group stopped just outside the main entrance when Matthew walked by. As he walked by, Mark stopped him to inquire about the rest of the Third Gens, “Matthew, do you assume those other teams of Third Gens are still alive after everything that’s happened?”

Matthew paused, and said, “Yes, I do. As medical research experts, Third Gens are the most advanced medical doctors in the world. If St. Paul management has teams of Third Gens, they can complete the Angel Project. More than likely, they’re being held in a foreign country hostile to the US. There are several countries that would have no problem allowing them to continue the work. Also, I suspect many in the upper echelon of St. Paul are probably using them as medical doctors. They have used us as personal physicians before, to treat certain management types when they got sick. I’m positive they’re still alive.”

“You don’t know how many others there are, right?”

“In fact, I do know. There were a total of ninety-six, several teams of six to twelve individuals.”

“Do you know if they want out from under St. Paul too? If so, are they capable of escaping on their own?”

“I don’t know. I’ve known only my team, and we never considered escaping. By the time we thought of it, we were sitting in a cage in the middle of a dark dungeon. We took the opportunity when the First and Second Gens broke out of Guantanamo. We had no plans to escape prior to that.”

“All right, Matthew. Thank you.”

“Are you going to free them?”

“We’re going to look into it. We don’t know their situation and whether they want out or not. Until we know that, we can’t do much of anything about them.”

Matthew went back to the barn, and the group spent the next three hours observing the operation and talking with the Gens. Everyone explained how happy they were to be out of the bay. Some expressed regret because the First Gens lost their lives. Gens didn’t hate one another. Most Second Gens didn’t have a problem with the First Gen’s sickness and blamed it on St. Paul.

Dee met with her team, of which there were only four left. They ate lunch and discussed the new lives they planned to live. She told them about the assets they gained, and how they would provide for them.

They told Dee about a relationship taking place between a Gen woman and a Baker in town. The young woman was to purchase bakery items until they got the ovens up and working. The Baker has called on her twice. When she was asked about it, she said she had mixed feelings, but Art suspected she liked him.

Lynn, one of Dee's team, said, "We are bringing this up because we're uncertain how we're to act outside the Gens. The rest of us assumed we would take on normal lives, and such relationships are more than likely possible. We're not all attracted to one another, you know."

Dee answered, "Yes, you're right, and it's normal and expected, although it might be wise to wait until we establish your new lives. Until then, a problem for one can become a problem for everyone."

They agreed. Dee thanked them and said she would talk to the Gen and bring the issue up with the group.

Jerri, another of Dee's team members brought up Matthew. "There's another issue you're unaware of. Walter, the neighbor to the east, and Matthew have become good friends. Matthew was teaching himself cheese making and was purchasing milk from Walter because the vineyard didn't have pastureland for grazing cattle. Walter offered him four acres of unused property for grazing, at a good price. Even though Matthew was offered the property, he wasn't sure who he needed to ask about whether he could purchase it. He talked to other Gens, but that was it. We are bringing this up because the Baker is Walter's son."

Dee said, “It’s only been a week. Is anyone running for Prime Minister yet? Anyway, it’s good you bring these kinds of issues up, but when you guys have a problem, you need to take it up with Art, and he will handle it. Isn’t it clear he’s in charge?”

Simone, another of Dee’s team answered, “We all figured that, but those Third Gens are different. I believe Matthew is in his own right, a leader. He’s kind and humble, but he won’t approach Art.”

Dee said, “Let’s take care of this right now.”

Dee called Ramous and Zoe over to their table and sent for Matthew. She introduced them to Ramous only because they already knew Zoe.

Once Matthew arrived, Dee explained, “Zoe and Ramous are the owners of the vineyard. They will be the contact for anything related to it. Until further notice, We want you to continue addressing your issues through Art, and if he can’t resolve it, then you can contact either Ramous or Zoe. Art won’t stand in your way, and you can get their number from him. We are all in the same situation, so we can’t be fighting among ourselves or mistrusting. Things are different now, Matthew. I understand you were in a leadership position when you were with St. Paul, but

again, things have changed, and you need to operate within our system, Okay?"

Matthew answered, "Yes, I understand. Is this about the four acres the neighbor offered to me? I wondered if it might become a problem. I bounced the idea off of a few friends. I was cautious about it because I wasn't sure how long I'd be here at the vineyard. I didn't have a reason to approach Art, yet. If I were leaving, there's no need to bring it up. I was waiting until I knew where my team and I will end up before I made any requests."

Dee looked at her team. They all looked off into space as if they were busy thinking, "You guys. Quit with the gossip!"

Zoe asked, "Matthew, I sense there's more to this than you're letting on. Is there?"

"Yes, I'd like to stay here at the vineyard and make cheese. I have found nothing in my short, disturbing life I enjoy more. I don't know what kind of life, or provisions for that life will be made, but I plan to become a cheese-maker wherever I land."

Zoe looked at Ramous. He didn't have to answer her; she already knew what he would say. "Matthew, if that's what you want to do, you're welcome to stay here,

with your team should they desire to stay, and manage the property. You can make cheese to your heart's content. Could you run the hotel too? Ramous and I will be irregular guests, so we need you to run the whole operation. Are you willing to run the hotel and vineyard for us?"

"I'd love to stay. I don't know what my team wants. If they don't want to stay, I have a few apprentices who would probably stay on with me."

"Great. So, let's buy the property and build a barn. I know you had to buy your milk, so let's buy the cattle instead so you can create a viable cheese-making facility."

Zoe looked at Dee, "Thank you, Dee, for bringing this up."

"You're welcome."

Once they left, Dee spent about a half a minute lecturing her team, but as she looked at their faces, she didn't have the heart to go any further. She knew the hardships they faced in the recent past. She wouldn't add to it.

"I'm so happy to see you guys. When I look at you, I miss the rest of our team. We were a good team. I promise

you; this will be the best ‘rest of one’s life’ you can have. We are in such a position to make it happen.”

When Cat and Mel arrived, Mel had everyone meet in the dining room.

“Gens, you need to give some ideas about your future. It won’t be long before you will move out of here and begin new lives without St. Paul or the CIA. We’ll assign somebody shortly to go over your plans with you, but we haven’t asked them yet. So, please be patient, but prepared when the time comes.”

Mark stood up and said, “We are working on getting the patents and birth certificates from the States. It’s believed the CIA still holds them. If they find out we’re still alive, they will come after us. We can’t count on dumb luck just because the US sank a ship. We will find them and get them one way or another. Afterward, there will be nothing they can do to us, ever again.”

They had a big spaghetti dinner and afterward, everyone stood around talking about what they intended to do with their new lives.

The group stayed for a week before heading back to Barcelona.

Once back, Ramous planned to call Mike to inquire about the patents and birth certificates. He'd determine how the nature of the conversation was before he revealed to Mike the status of the second Gens. Also, he planned to ask him about the Third Gens, those who might still be under the control of St. Paul management.

Once everyone settled in at the villa, Ramous made the call.

“Hello.”

“Hi Mike, how are you?”

“Hello Ram, I'm good. I'm in room 7 at the Beach Comber for the week. I was wondering when you'd call. Are you planning on coming back? It seems the coast is clear should you do so.”

“We're not ready to come back, yet. I need to talk to you about some important unfinished business. We want the patents and the birth certificates for the Gens.”

“Why do you want them? They're all dead, which makes those documents useless.”

“Zoe, Mel, and Cat are still alive. Neither one of them will be happy until they have them in their possession.”

“Ram, we stopped looking for them when the ship sank. I guess the CIA still has them. Silver, Jerome and I thought it was too dangerous for Zoe and the others if we continued asking about them.”

“Okay, Mike, the problem is bigger than that. I could sit here and try to convince you all day and get nowhere. Go buy a burner and call me back, and do it now, please.”

“I have several with me. I’ll call you right back.”

Mike hung up and called back on one of his burners. He hasn’t needed to use one for a while. He bought a few, just in case anything like this came up.

“Thanks for calling back, Mike. I will let you in on a secret. You must keep it to yourself. Don’t tell Jerome, Silver, or anyone. The Second Gens are not dead. They did not die when the ship sank. Only the first Gens were onboard. When they broke out of the bay, the First Gens started killing guards on their way to the dock. The Second Gens turned in a different direction. They are here in Europe as we speak. That’s why we need the patents and the birth certificates, so if St. Paul or the CIA find them, they can’t do anything about it.

There was silence on the other end.

Ramous asked, “Are you there?”

“Yes, I’m here. Do you know how big this is?”

“I do. I was trying to get the patents and certificates without revealing why. I would have told you eventually, but I wanted to make sure they were safe before we had that discussion. Can you ask Jerome and come up with a symbolic reason you need to acquire those papers? I’m sure you understand how important they are?”

“I understand. I may have to let Jerome and Silver in on the secret. Silver is the best person to get them for you.”

“Use your judgment. I trust you, but tell them only if you need to. I suspect you will get the same resistance you gave me. Also, I won’t tell anyone where they are in case things go south. Mike, don’t tell them I mentioned Europe, please?”

“I won’t Ram. I’ll come up with logical reason to get them, okay?”

“Okay, Mike. Goodbye.”

The girls were listening to the whole conversation and were concerned that Mike might not pull it off.

Ramous assured them Mike could do it. Mike's been dependable in the past and a good asset.

Jerome answered, "Hello."

"Hi Jerome, this is Mike. I need your help."

"What can I do for you, Mike?"

"I need closure on the Gens. It's been tearing my heart ever since they died. I want to get all the patents, and birth certificates, build a bonfire on the beach and burn them all as I mention each name. I don't want them remembered as parts, machines, or property, owned and discarded. We can't just forget about them. I can't. Jerome, you were closer to them than I was, and if you like you can join me, you're more than welcome to. Again, we can't just forget them."

"Yes, I was close, especially with my detail. That's a nice gesture, Mike. I would like to join you in doing so. Let me contact Silver and he can request them for us. I'll call him and get back to you tomorrow."

"Thanks, Jerome. I'll talk to you tomorrow, goodbye."

Mike walked downstairs and told both Peter and Emily that Ramous called. He told them Ram was in a

hurry and was making an inquiry about legal stuff. He also told them Ram was not coming back any time soon, but they already knew that.

Mike said, “I guess he’s having a good time in Europe.”

Emily answered, “Yes, we already knew.”

The Beach Comber has been operating at breakneck speed. They completed the five cabins, and Emily was preparing to hire a manager and put them up for rent. Hank, Maggie, and the kids were practically living there while Hank was overseeing the construction. Emily and Peter hoped that didn’t change just because they’re finished. Maggie still complained, at every opportunity, about how Ramous tricked her into becoming police Chief. The City was planning on making her the permanent Chief. The City Council liked her and realized she was just as capable as Ramous in the position.

That evening Jerome contacted Silver and inquired about the patents and birth certificates. He explained to him what Mike told him and how it would be closure for both him and Mike.

Silver said he would contact the AG the next day and try to get them. He told Jerome he was reluctant to ask the CIA or DOJ himself.

Silver was concerned about how things were going too slow for him regarding Whiteside and Goodman. Both Directors should be in jail already, at least kicked out of office. The AG and his staff still had their hands full with all the people involved with St. Paul.

Hundreds of people from other countries continued to operate as if nothing had changed, and the US was having a hard time bringing those foreigners to justice. Several in Congress were pressuring the president to call off his dogs, referring to the AG's office, but the president was behind him one hundred percent.

The next day Silver called the AG.

A woman answered, "Hello, US Attorney's office, how can I direct your call?"

"Hello, good morning. Is Arthur Moore in?"

"May I ask who's calling?"

"This is Silver Durant with Robbins, Durant, and James."

"One second, please."

Moore answered, "Hello, Silver. How are you?"

"I'm good, Arthur. I need to ask you a favor if that's possible."

"Okay, tell me what you need."

"I'm sure you recall Mike Davies and Jerome Waters."

"Of course, I do."

"Well, they have asked me to help them bring closure regarding the Gens. Jerome asked me for the patents and birth certificates for every Gen. He and Mike plan to build a fire on an Oregon beach and burn each one as a memorial, and they have asked me to do what I can to make this happen. Is that possible?"

"Silver, you're in luck. We have those documents at this office, per our last conversation. We have no use for them. Would you like me to send them to you, or do you want to pick them up?"

"I'm in town and will come to pick them up in the morning. Is that okay?"

"Yes, that's fine. Goodbye."

"Goodbye, Arthur. See you tomorrow morning."

His next call was to Jerome to inform him he hoped to pick up the paperwork the next morning. Afterward, he planned to catch a flight out of DC and deliver it to him, in person, in the afternoon.

Jerome called Mike and relayed the message. He told Mike he could meet him at the Beach Comber in two days. Mike realized he had to tell Jerome what was going on. Otherwise, he'd expect him to burn the papers.

“Hello,” Ramous answered.

“Hi Ram, I have information for you. Silver is picking up the paperwork tomorrow morning and delivering it to Jerome. Jerome plans to fly into Portland the next day. So, he'll be here the day after tomorrow with the documents. Neither one knows the situation of the Gens. I got them to turn them over without telling them too much. There's a problem though.”

“What's the problem?”

“Jerome thinks he's coming for a memorial bonfire on the beach. I told him I needed closure and wanted to burn each patent and birth certificate honoring each Gen, and he wants to join me.”

“That’s a problem. I trust Jerome so you can tell him, but don’t do it until you have the paperwork in your hands. I’m sure he will freak out.”

“I’ll contact you after I have the paperwork and revealed the situation to him. Goodbye, Ram.”

As soon as Ramous hung up, Mel said, “We need to fly into the states and pick up those documents ourselves. They shouldn’t be mailed, nor should we let Mike and Jerome burn them. We will burn them ourselves once we have verified their authenticity. Mike had a good idea, but we need to do it ourselves. Anyone up for a plane ride?”

Mark and Dee chose to stay behind while the rest of the group flew to Oregon. They would take a Gulf Stream and land at the Hillsboro airport, where they could rent a car. The Hillsboro Airport was the closest airport to Tillamook.

Mel and Cat went into Madrid that afternoon to prep the plane. They planned to leave at 3 AM the next morning. When Ramous and Zoe got to the airport, they already fueled the plane and were ready to go. Mel already filed the flight plan, so nothing was standing in their way.

Ramous was eager to see Emily and Peter. Also, he wanted to inspect the new cabins. He was concerned

whether they should risk seeing anyone else, as they did not want word to get out that they were in the states. They kept it to Peter, Emily, and Mike, maybe Hank and Maggie. It was too important to get the documents back to Spain and destroyed before they made any other contacts.

Fourteen hours later, they landed at the Hillsboro airport. Once in, they rented a van and headed for the Beach Comber. When Ramous walked through the back door, Emily almost fainted. She walked up to him and hugged him and then shouted for Peter, who nearly had a heart attack when he saw Ramous.

Peter shouted, “Ram! What are you doing here?”

“We’re in for just two days and returning the day after tomorrow. We have urgent business with Mike, and once done, we will need to leave. So, please keep it on the down low, okay?”

“Is Mike still around? Last I talked to him he was staying here in room 7.”

Emily answered, “He went into town to buy a hoodie. It has been chilly on the beach early morning the last week. He should be back soon.”

Ramous asked, “How’s your chef working out, Emily?”

“He’s a great Chef. I’m thinking I’ll give him a raise, so we don’t lose him to another resort on the coast. Did you ask because you’re hungry?”

“Yes, we’re all hungry, since we’ve only been eating nuts all the way from Europe. Someone forgot to buy food for the trip.”

He turned towards Mel and Cat.

Mel argued, “Well, we forgot. Okay, next time we fly, bring your own food, I’m not your mother, you know.”

Emily asked the Chef, Boris, to BBQ steaks on the back deck for everyone.

As they were eating, Mike came walking around the corner. He smiled when he saw the group and shook Ramous’ hand and hug Zoe and the others.

Ramous asked, “Mike, we came ourselves to retrieve those documents. Have you heard from Jerome?”

“He’s running two hours late and should be here this evening. He’ll be happy to see you. How did you get here?”

Mel said, “We have our ways, and if you like, you can go back with us.”

“I’m considering going with you. Is that the only way to find out?”

“We have a Gulf Stream III. We flew in and landed at the Hillsboro airport and drove here. Again, you’re still welcome to join us.”

“It might be nice to get out of town for a while. I have my passport with me so I can take a commercial flight back, and I’m not doing anything for the next month. I don’t even have a job, so I’ll give it serious thought.”

When they finished their meal, they went for a walk on the beach. Emily needed to prepare for the staff change and didn’t join them.

Zoe said, “I forgot how beautiful the Oregon coast was. Now I’m here, I miss it. I miss the simpler days before they blew Ramous and me up in Netarts.”

They all laughed.

Cat said, “That must have been painful,”

Ramous answered, “It was! Yes, it was.”

Mike’s cell rang. It was Jerome, and he was at the Beach Comber waiting, so they returned to the resort.

When they got back, only Mike approached the back deck where Jerome was waiting, drinking a soda.

“Hello Jerome, how are you, my friend?”

“I’m good. Sorry, I’m late.”

“Did you bring the documents?”

“Yes, they’re right here,” he said as he pointed to a briefcase next to him.

“Okay, grab it and come with me. I want to show you something.”

Mike led Jerome to the gate, opening to the beach where he presented the group standing just on the other side. Jerome grinned from ear to ear.

Mike explained that he never intended to burn the documents but planned on turning them over to the group.

Mike said, “Jerome, the Second Gens aren’t dead. They escaped and are living in Europe. It’s they who want the documents and after verifying their authenticity, will destroy them themselves.”

Jerome wasn’t surprised and was happy they didn’t go down with the ship.

“Guys, I have other news you might like. I’m sure the AG was suspicious because not only did he turn over all the original documents, he instructed the patent office to destroy all internal and public records related to the Gens. No one can hurt a Gen and get away with it ever again!”

That was a concern turned into relief. Then he handed the briefcase over to Ramous, but Mel reached in and grabbed it. She opened the case and pulled out two patents.

She sighed, “These are the originals.”

Then, she went through them all to find her, Cat’s, and Zoe’s patents and birth certificates. Once she found them, she set them on the ground and lit them on fire. They stood there watching until there was nothing but ashes left.

Mel stood up and said, “Let’s go back to Madrid now. I don’t want to wait a minute longer.”

Cat and Zoe agreed. They should fly back to Madrid immediately.

Ramous didn’t interfere with their decision, but asked if he could look at the new cabins first, and then he agreed with them. Jerome understood, telling them it was good to see them and encouraged them to do so. He knew

how vital those papers were to the Gens, how destroying them would be tantamount to being set free.

Mike told them he wouldn't be joining them. So, the group inspected the new cabins and returned to the Beach Comber to say goodbye. Everyone was anxious on the trip back, especially Zoe, Mel, and Cat. They could barely contain themselves over the excitement.

Once back in Madrid, Zoe called Mark and Dee, "We're back with the documents, and they're all here. We'll catch the last train to Rome. You guys catch the first train in the morning and meet us there. We'll all go to Tuscany together from there."

Mark replied, "Will do. See you in Rome."

Ramous, Zoe, Mel and Cat arrived at the train station just in time to catch the last one. They made their way to the dining car and ordered dinner.

Zoe looked at Mel, then Cat, and said, "We're being followed."

Cat responded, "I noticed them too. That man and the woman behind me two tables to your left are undercover pretending they're married."

She looked at Ramous, “Usually there are three kinds of undercover individuals who are supposed to act married. There are those who are both single and tend to grab each other more than normal, often overacting. There are, ‘The one’s married and one’s single couple.’ In that case, the single one is uncomfortable holding or touching the other, and the other tends to flinch when touched. Then there’s the ‘undercover married couple who are both married.’ They appear to talk a lot, but not about each other. It’s always about other things. That couple, one is married, and one is not. The woman is married, and the man is single.”

Mel interjected, “Also, they’re Middle Eastern. They don’t appear to be American. What adversaries do we currently have in the Middle East who might follow us? We haven’t been there recently. Something doesn’t make sense.”

Zoe answered, “Perhaps, it has to do with all those assets you acquired? Do you suppose Israel wants them for themselves?”

Mel laughed and said, “I don’t think so, but the guy to your right two tables behind me is an Israeli. I saw a

tablet when we passed him written in Hebrew. The way he looks at the couple, I can tell they're together."

Mel got up and sat across from him.

"Hi, how are you? Are you from Madrid?"

"No, I'm from Israel, and you? You have an American accent, are you from America?"

Mel replied by speaking to the man in Hebrew, with a perfect accent, "You, and the other couple, are following us. Please tell me why."

What he said next surprised Mel, "You're right Melissa 21, I know you're traveling with Zoe 3, and Catherine 23, and the Police Chief, Ramous Rignor, from the small town of Tillamook, Oregon. We are following you, but not to bring you any harm."

Mel looked back at the group. Then she replied, "That's Tillamook, Oregon. I could kill you right here, and no one would notice until we disembarked. So, if you want to live and enjoy the beautiful sunrise, tell me why you're shadowing us?"

Before he could respond, the undercover couple got up and sat down at the group's table.

The woman said, “My name is Ariella Perez, Ariella 265. We have a private car in the back. I’m sure that sounds suspicious, but if you come with us, we can explain. We need your help.”

Zoe looked at Cat. She returned the look and said, “Yes, she’s telling the truth.”

“All right, we’ll join you. Lead the way,” Zoe said as they all got up to follow.

When they passed Mel and the other Israeli, Mel and the Israeli had already started flirting with one another.

Zoe stopped to look at them, almost annoyed. “Mel! What’s the matter with you?”

The Israelis were traveling in a nice, expensive train car to themselves.

Ramous said, “This is nice.”

Aaron said, “That’s not important, although it’s a nice coach, and there’s plenty of food on the table if you like. What’s important is we can now have a conversation out of earshot of the public.”

Zoe asked, “What would that conversation be? May I ask?”

The fake husband spoke up, “As you have already figured out, we’re with Israeli Intelligence. We followed you from the airport. We knew you just got back from the States and we’ve been tailing you since. Fortunately for us, this quiet, obscure, beautiful coach was available when we purchased tickets.

“My name is Joshua Cohen. This other man is Aaron Bilik, and Ariella Perez has already introduced herself. Our real names are Aaron 262, Joshua 268, and again, Ariella 265.”

Zoe cut him off and said, “Those numbers don’t exist. If you’re telling us you’re Gens, the last Gen was 260. Your information is screwed up. Again, those numbers don’t exist.”

Aaron answered, “Yes, they do, but you were never told about them. Do you recall the name, David Goldberg?”

Ramous spoke, “I do. He was one of the founding fathers of St. Paul. He was one of six men worldwide instrumental in forming and financing the St. Paul Corporation and the Angel Project.”

Cat looked at Ramous, “Ram! Keep that information to yourself, please.”

“Oh. Sorry.”

Aaron said, “You’re right. Now, let me tell you about numbers 261 through 270. Goldberg found out Israeli women were going to America for abortions. He learned ten of those abortions were incorporated into the Angel Project. Goldberg was an evil man, but he wouldn’t have the Americans, or anyone else, take control over any Israelis. Because of his position within the corporation, he was able to make the researchers pull the ten of us from the program. He created another program, called the Israel Project. Once we were viable, they filled our heads with Israeli childhoods and did everything to us they did to you, except from an Israeli point of view.

“Ariella grew up in Tel Aviv. Josh grew up in Hebron, and I grew up in Jerusalem. He removed us from the Angel Project and kept us a secret from every other department within St. Paul. That’s why we have those numbers, and why they exist. By the way, we’re Second Generation.”

Ramous asked, “I’m curious, Where’s Goldberg now, and are you working for him?”

Aaron answered, “No, we don’t work for Goldberg. Mr. David Goldberg is in a dark place away from society,

writing his memoirs. He knows too many secrets and can't be trusted anymore. He's a bit on the crazy side. His replacement told us about the rest of the second Gens, and we know about you in particular."

The group, when he said that, displayed various kinds of disturbed looks. Well, except for Ramous, who had his face in a large excellent roast beef sandwich. He looked up to see their faces and displayed his own version of a contorted expression, but with a mouth full of unrelated circumstances, it was a bit disingenuous, of course.

Aaron continued, "I'm sure you remember Mr. Holstein. We found out when we got back from Denmark that the United States sent in two covert actors to infiltrate his organization. Unfortunately, it was too late, and we already dealt with the man. When leaving, two of our undercover agents saw two American women on the property, who were last seen entering Holstein's office building."

Mel asked, "How did you figure out they were American?"

“There are no Danish Gens. There are only American and Israeli ones. They moved so quickly; they had to be Gens. Besides, we captured them on video.”

Mel said, “That was Cat and me.”

“Yes, I know. Good job to the both of you. Afterward, how did you avoid Guantanamo?”

Cat answered, “We were on the run already. St. Paul and the US government presumed they killed us in the Seattle explosion. Fortunately, we slept in. Afterward, we fled to Europe. We’ve been here for a while. How did you find out they sent the Gens to the bay?”

“We have our sources in the US government. Israel has a few Jews in important places who help us out occasionally. General Levitt got wind that the US locked up all the Gens in Guantanamo Bay, so he put a man on the ground. The agent reported how the Gens escaped with two different groups going two different ways, one to the harbor and the other to a landing strip outside Santiago de Cuba. We knew you got away and didn’t drown with the others. We are sorry for their loss. The Gens have suffered too much already. According to our agent, it appeared the First Gens ran interference for the other group. They kept the American soldiers on their trail. Our source told us, the

Second Gens, were the easier target, but the First Gens slowed down and threw rocks at the soldiers causing them to pursue the First instead. In fact, several First Gens stayed behind to make sure no stragglers went after the second group.”

Zoe asked, “Was your agent a guard?”

Aaron stopped and looked at Zoe. “Yes, he was an American soldier. He was also an Israeli immigrant. One of General Levitt’s friends in the US military transferred our man to the bay once we heard about the captivity of the Gens. We will not tell the US you’re situation. They have handled your situation badly. Second, we want you to do us a favor.”

Mel asked, “What favor is that?”

“While in Denmark, we couldn’t take Holstein’s assets. That would have created an international incident. When we found out what you did, we had to inquire. We are, of course, inquiring minds. Initially, we assumed those who robbed the safe were another terrorist group. Then the two agents came forward, explained what they saw, and how fast you moved. They took a video of you entering the building.”

Cat turned to Mel, “You’re getting sloppy, girl!”

“No, you are. I told you to keep an eye out for any dogs in the area.”

Zoe said, “It’s all right ladies; you were dealing with Gens like yourselves.”

Both agreed and became attentive to what Aaron was saying.

Aaron said, “Are you two finished? That was not our first rodeo. Personally, I believe you were just a little overconfident.”

Mel perked up as if to say something but changed her mind.

“Anyway, we were pleased you were not another terrorist group and pleased you took those assets out of play. That was big for us. So, your pennies, property, planes, and boats are safe in your possession. Israel has no desire to take them from you.”

Zoe said, “Okay, don’t insult us. That’s no way to get us to cooperate. There’s not the slightest chance you or anyone else can take anything from us, unless we give it away.”

“I apologize. You’re right. What I want to say is that you impressed us and gave us cause to ask you to do it

again. How well you concealed what you did was fantastic. Other than knowing it was Gens, our experts lost the trail and couldn't pick it up again. That impressed us most."

Mel said, "Well, a little of this a little of that. How do we know you're not lying to us? It has been an interesting story, but can you prove any of it? Can you prove you're who you say you are?"

Aaron said to Zoe, "Feel the bone above my elbow. Right above the elbow, you will feel the bone spur. That spur is only found on Gens, right?"

Zoe found the indent. She knew what he said was true.

She asked, "You identified Melissa and Catherine during their operation, but how did you find us afterward?"

"We followed the money. It was interesting to watch the ghost of Holstein sell off all his property. Before his garage sale, we had pictures of every Gen. that was because Goldberg could get anything he wanted from St. Paul and requested all the photos and associated names when the Seattle office was destroyed. He was paranoid and wanted to find out what Gens survived the explosion. We thought you three were among the dead.

“When Melissa entered the title office to finish the purchase of the Tuscany vineyard, they captured her picture. You should have worn a disguise, Melissa. We knew the transfer was taking place on that day and we hoped to get a picture of the culprit on the security cameras. To our surprise, it was Melissa 21. When we saw you, we worried you might have been involved with the explosion in Seattle, but concluded you were not. We recognized you as one of the two women our agents saw in Denmark.

“Massad placed an agent, Joshua, here, in Tuscany, waiting for you to appear. We have been following you since. Don’t worry. Nobody else knows about you and it will stay that way. We Gens need to stick together.”

Zoe looked at the briefcase and said, “Okay, that makes sense. So, I assume this briefcase should also contain the patents and birth certificates for the three of you.”

“Is that what’s in the case?”

Mel answered, “Yes, we plan to destroy what’s inside once we get to Tuscany.”

“Our patents were destroyed a long time ago. We had a friend in the Israeli government who fought for our freedom and the destruction of those documents. Fortunate

for us, all Israelis understand what it means to be free of oppression, even from our government. So, we're free to live as we choose. Five made careers in the military. We love this kind of work. So, here we are, and we support what you did. On another note, if things hadn't gone so smoothly for you in Cuba, we would have broken them out of the bay. We also knew about the documents and what they meant. We would have broken into the CIA Director's office ourselves to steal the documents and given them to you. As we suspected, you were more than capable of doing so by yourselves."

Zoe said, "I guess we should thank you. Now, what's the favor you need?"

"Mr. Holstein has another compound in Beirut, Lebanon. Within his compound is another safe with more assets. Holstein was paranoid and tended to keep all his personal and important records spread out, but within his reach. He probably has more assets spread around the world. We haven't found them yet. No one will take them because the world doesn't know he's dead yet. Well, the Iranians think he is, but they're not sure. Until they have or see his body, they can only speculate. The agents who carried out the operation in Denmark took his body. Holstein was the son of a German man and an Afghani

woman. He looked Middle Eastern. They used that to their advantage. So, after the team killed him, they took him and dressed him up as an immigrant and dumped his body on the street where homeless Syrians were living. The authorities assumed they beat him to death and robbed him. They listed him as a John Doe. They didn't even bother to check fingerprints or DNA, figuring he was just a homeless person. Again, we sent in an agent to monitor the process. They cremated Holstein without knowing who he was."

Mel said, "We saw you take his body, and wondered why. Apparently, you didn't want anyone to know he was dead. Why?"

"We knew he had a lot of assets, and we didn't want some other idiot to get ahold of them and start a war, or blow something big up. Holstein gave a lot of money to subversive groups, but he liked the money and dished it out sparingly. Again, Holstein has another compound in Beirut. The IDF plans to attack the compound. Hezbollah has been stockpiling weapons there, and we intend to destroy those weapons too. When we do, we want you to bury those assets just like you did the first ones. Only, we speculate these assets are worth three times the ones you removed from Denmark. We estimate there's over three billion USD, in offshore accounts. There are twenty plus properties

throughout the world, seven aircraft, twenty-four luxury cars, and two yachts, but more important, of those planes, one is an F16 and the other an F35, both sitting in a hanger on the compound. Neither is of use to you. So, we're thinking of taking them and hiding them. Otherwise, we will blow them up."

Zoe said, "Sounds dangerous. How do you know all this, regarding the assets, that is?"

"I went undercover as an Iranian secret service agent. I pretended Iran was worried about how General Hasad was handling the funds and other donations provided by Iran. While there, Hasad gave me a detailed list and showed me all the accounts, deeds, and titles to everything I just told you about. All of them are kept in the safe in Hasad's office. Hasad has been an Israeli asset for years, but he's ready to get out of Lebanon. He's getting nervous and doesn't care for Iran. He hates what they're doing to Lebanon, and to the Lebanese people. Israel has agreed to move him and his family to a safe place and set them up with a new life in Brazil. The rest regarding Hasad is top secret. He doesn't care about the money or the assets. He was charged with protecting them by Holstein himself. I told him what happened to Holstein. So, now Holstein's

gone, he's relieved and under no obligation to continue protecting those assets."

Cat asked, "So you have an inside man? What about the Iranians, do they know about the assets?"

"The Iranians only know there's a large sum of cash available to Hezbollah. They don't have a clue about the amount, and because they don't have any evidence of Holstein's death, they will leave it alone. On the day we go in, there will be several Iranian high-level military personnel in the compound. They will do everything they can to get out of town. They don't want it known, particularly by the United States, they're there. We will let them run away. Those left behind will assume the Iranians took the contents of the safe. The Iranians will in turn, assume Hezbollah took the contents. Neither Iran nor Hezbollah know what and how much is there. Only General Hasad and now the Israeli government knows. They will blame each other, or Israel, but won't say or do anything about it."

"Will Hasad be able to get out of dodge afterward?"

"We will get Hasad out. The IDF will go into Beirut, attack the compound, and make it look like they demolished his car with his family inside. Then, we'll blow

up the warehouse containing the weapons. It's normal for Israel to blow up their weapon depots. I might mention how funny and ironic that is. They stock weapons, and we blow them up like we're dancing the two-step. So, we'll become dance partners again. Israel will say a few disrespectful things about Hasad before we go in, how we intend to deal with him, and his terrorist activities. It will be an ordinary operation for Israel, but we need you to relieve the safe of its contents for us. You will need to go in with us and break into Hasad's office, his safe, take the contents, and get out of there. We, Israel, only want two billion moved to a clandestine account that can't be tied to Israel. Can you do that?"

Zoe looked at Ramous, Mel looked at Zoe, Cat looked at Zoe, and Ramous looked at the roast beef on the table. After everyone came to, Zoe said, "What you're saying is the Israeli government will give us a billion-plus USD and the other physical assets just to hide those assets?"

"Yes, that's what I'm saying. Believe me when I say you're doing us a favor, and we believe no one in this world can do what you have done. So, yes, that's what I'm saying. The IDF will get in and out before the safe is compromised. We'll provide security, but no one will see

us. You will have to go in as we're leaving, right after we blow up their weapons depot. They must believe we left right afterward and didn't find the safe."

Again, they all looked at each other.

Zoe said, "We'll do it. Once we have had our funeral for these documents, we will be available. When do you expect to raid the compound?"

"Next Friday, we will be in and out before Sabbath. That timing will assure those concerned will believe we wouldn't stick around for any reason when the Sabbath is upon us."

Then, Aaron said, "Oh, Hasad keeps a newer Gulf Stream G550 fueled and ready to go in case of an emergency. Everything you need to get it into the air is in the safe. You can fly it into Israel and then take it with you when you leave. That's your best exit route out of Lebanon."

Cat said, "There you go, our escape just got much easier. Just let us get in sight of the office before you pull your people out. We can handle it from there." She looked at Zoe and said, "Right Zoe?"

Zoe answered, “Well, thank you for asking Cat. We can and we will fly into Sde Dov Airbase next Thursday. Please inform them we’re coming so we don’t get shot down. We will also fly our Gulf Stream III. Don’t confuse it with an Iranian craft, okay?”

“We were ready to fly you in, but you can fly in yourselves. We’ll have you land at the military airport. It sounds like we’re in business. I have a question. Didn’t Melissa and Catherine pull off the Denmark operation? How is it you have taken the lead on this? Shouldn’t we go with them?”

Mel answered, “Who do you think taught us how to do all of that stuff?”

“Oh,”

Zoe said, “Yes, we’re in business. On another note, we’re looking for another ninety Third Gens. Have you heard anything about them?”

“Goldberg told us about twenty-four Third Gens in Saudi Arabia, and about another group in China. I believe there were eighteen of them killed in a raid of an underground hospital there. The Chinese office of St. Paul had them killed because they read the Bible and refused to do any more experiments for them. Instead, they went

underground and offered free medical to the poor. That's what we heard, but we don't have any way of proving he was telling us the truth. We've caught him in several grandiose lies during his stay with us. It was interesting he of all people brought up the bible. He's at best an Atheist, but it sounds like the Bible has caused our Atheist friend and St. Paul a certain amount of trouble."

Zoe responded, "Indeed."

Ramous realized his wife had reached a new level of respect in his eyes. He was so impressed by how she handled the situation and the conversation. He realized Mel and Cat were subordinate to her. All this time, he thought Mel and Cat were special, and Zoe was not as experienced as they were. That was not the case. She took the lead with no resistance or conflict from either.

The group spent the rest of the train ride in the private car with the Israelis, who turned out to be genuinely nice people.

Working Capital

Upon arrival, the three Israelis left the train station for the airport. They left for home to prepare for the operation.

Mel and Cat rented a car and left for Tuscany. They wanted the documents in the hands of the Gens before anything could go wrong. Another day was too long to hold on to the lives of their friends and colleagues. Besides, neither one felt safe carrying them around Rome.

Zoe and Ramous, on the other hand, spent the rest of the day site-seeing. They stopped in a little bistro for lunch. Mostly, they walked around while Zoe shopped. Ramous wondered if this was becoming a pattern.

“These pants make my butt look too big. I can tell by the way you’re looking at me. Tell me honestly, do they make my butt look too big?”

“Sweetheart, you’re as thin as a rail. There’s not a pair of pants in this world that could make your butt look too big. Now, your feet are a different story.”

“What? What did you say? Did you say something?”

“No. I was thinking of dinner. I said I’d like to have roast beef for dinner. That’s all.”

“Oh. So you can stuff your face again? I saw you at that table in the rail car. I was wondering how one person could fit so much into one mouth.”

“That was some excellent roast beef. I’m still hungry for more, and don’t be rude!”

“I was kidding, Hon. I heard what you said about my feet. You be nice.”

“Yes, Dear.”

An hour later, they met the train when Mark and Dee arrived, and then rented a van to drive to Tuscany.

Zoe filled Mark and Dee in on what took place on the trip from Madrid to Rome. Dee was excited.

Dee said, “We could use the money to place everyone. It would go a long way in providing security, and better lives for the Gens at Tuscany.”

Zoe agreed.

That evening, everyone gathered around the front of the hotel. Ramous and Mark built a bonfire about two hours before. Once the fire was established, Mark stood up and spoke, “My friends, tonight you will gain your freedom. I have a few things to mention. Through this act, we will recognize all our friends who died. We will consider this as a commitment to find those who are still missing, and we will consider this as establishing your freedom from governmental and corporate overlords.”

Everyone cheered and clapped.

Then Mark said, “I’m going to ask Art to come up and oversee the rest of this wake. He has been instrumental in getting you here. Without him, I wouldn’t be looking at any of your beautiful faces. I’d only have visions of heartache in my mind, otherwise. Thank you, Art.”

Art stood up to speak, “I have in my hands everyone’s patent and birth certificate. Let me say this before we start. The US Attorney General had every piece of information regarding us held by the US patent office destroyed. These documents are the only physical representation of our past. Destroying this information

means these documents can never be used to our detriment, ever again.”

Everyone cheered again.

He went on, “Included in these documents are all the names of our friends who died over the past year. I will call their names as we burn their documents, but I don’t want to wait another second, freeing those who are alive. So, I’ll call the names of the living first. When your name is called, come up and take the documents from my hand and toss them into the fire. All of us will stand and watch it burn before I call the next name. After we all have burned our personal documents, we will then call out the names of our friends who are no longer with us, including all the First Gens.”

Zoe stood up and interrupted. “I’m going to tell you about a heroic act that took place while you were at the bay.”

Everyone expected her to mention the heroic actions of this person or that. Instead, “While you were escaping from Guantanamo Bay, the First Gens started shooting the guards. In doing so, the First Gens sacrificed themselves so you could get away. When the guards turned to come after you, they caused them to turn away, by

throwing rocks and putting themselves between you and them. It's clear, you would not have escaped without them. I wanted everyone to know that. This was observed and told by an Israeli undercover agent, who was there at the time. In my mind, they will always be heroes."

The sound of crackling fire was the only thing heard over the silence. Many tearful eyes sparkled against the broken light.

Zoe joined the crowd as Art softly called names. Each Gen came up, took and tossed their patent and birth certificates into the fire. They were free!

When Art finished calling all the Second Gen names, he began calling the first. When he called the first name, Dania Blue, the crowd went crazy. Every name afterward was followed by loud cheers and clapping. They didn't finish until morning, just before the sun came up. Everyone went to their rooms and slept most of the day.

When Art finished calling the First Gens, he still had a stack of documents remaining. He did not call those names. When they looked at them, they realized the documents were patents and birth certificates for ninety Third Gens. Matthew joined them, to see if he could identify any of them.

The next day, Sunday morning, the group got together for brunch.

Zoe stretched and said, “I could get used to living here. I was also thinking that we need to purchase houses close to the airport, so we can have fast and easy access to the hanger.”

Mark said, “I’m not necessarily disagreeing with you, but I think that’s a matter for another time.”

“Okay, what I’m saying is that we need a place to stay while we’re in Madrid.”

Silence.

“All right, let’s move on to the real issue at hand. If the IDF can get us through the gates of the compound, we should have no problem assaulting Hasad’s office. My concern is the plane will not be on the runway. I’m thinking Dee and I can break into the office and safe, Mel, and Cat can go straight to the plane. I want to invite Art and another sharpshooter in case you two need them.”

Mel said, “We don’t need them. Both of us are marksmen. We should be able to handle any tactical problems.”

“That’s not the issue. You two will need to concentrate on other things, like getting into the plane and not getting shot while you’re using your hands for other things.”

“I guess that makes sense. I’m sure Art has others on his team who could be useful.”

“Sounds good, Mel. Also, let’s not get too confident. This appears to be a cakewalk, and too often, that can end up with the worse consequences. I don’t want anyone to get hurt.”

Mel spoke with Art, and he agreed to join them. Since the group asked for two support personnel, he asked his number two, Eric, to join them in the operation.

The team was ready, so the group, over the next couple of days, spent their time talking with the other Gens.

Mel spent a lot of her time on the phone during that time.

Cat asked, “Who are you talking to?”

Mel hesitated until she asked again.

“I’m talking to Aaron.”

“He seems like a nice guy. Will you be moving to Israel?”

“If anything, he will join us in Barcelona,” she replied.

Cat inquired, “Is it getting serious?”

“Yes, I like him more than I have anyone before.”

“Good for you, Hon, good for you,” Cat said and walked away.

After two days, the group, including Art and Eric, left for Madrid. They flew out Tuesday evening and arrived at the Israeli airbase early Wednesday morning.

Aaron and several other high-ranking officers greeted them and invited into a soundproof conference room. As soon as they sat, two of the officers expressed their concerns about using American citizens in an Israeli covert operation.

General Levitt was there and told them both to shut up as he smiled at the American citizens.

Zoe explained to them once the IDF got them through the gates of the compound they could finish the mission from there. It wouldn't be problem if they left before she and Dee assaulted Hasad's office.

She told them their only concern was the Gulfstream, and will it be on the tarmac?

Aaron eased their concerns, having relayed and hearing back from Hasad that he would make sure it was there that day and prepped to go.

The Israelis were still devising their plan to get Hasad and his family out of Beirut. That was an hour they will never get back.

They planned to leave Friday at noon, and cross a fence into Lebanon at a secret location an hour later, where two vans would be waiting for them. They had forty-five minutes to get to the compound once they were through the fence.

Hasad will arrive in his family car, with his family, at 1:45PM. The IDF will fire three grenades just inside the compound. That should cause gate security to take cover while Hasad and his family get out of the car and meet up with a waiting IDF van.

Once they're safe, the IDF will blow the gates, hit the weapons depot, and destroy the car at the same time.

That's when the group will enter the compound as the IDF lays quick cover fire for them.

If the IDF has learned anything about Hezbollah is when they're being shot at, they keep their heads down. No one wants to die for that organization.

Zoe said, "It will take thirty seconds to reach Hasad's office, four minutes to subdue security, open and then empty the safe. I'll throw a grenade inside this time and close the safe's door and run. There's no time to set a trap. From there, it will take another twenty seconds to reach the plane. Mel, Cat, Art, and Eric will secure the plane. Mel will start the engines and wait for us. Art, Eric, and Cat will lay cover fire for us as we make our way to the plane. Once we're in the plane, we will take off and land at the Israeli airbase."

The plan was acceptable to everyone.

After the meeting, the General approached Zoe and asked her to feel just above his elbow. He told her not to say anything.

She did as he asked. There was the indent. She looked at him and smiled.

He said to her, "Levitt 261."

The plan went off without a hitch. Hasad and his family were safe and on their way to Israel. Zoe and Dee

opened, emptied, blew up the safe, and made their way to the plane.

When Zoe and Dee got to the plane, Mel was not there. Cat was in the pilot's seat.

Zoe asked in horror, "What happened to Mel?"

Art answered, "There was a change in plans. She said she would meet us in Israel."

Zoe assumed she was going back with the IDF. She was mad she didn't stick to the plan. There has been too much goofing off over the last year.

Then she realized things weren't what they used to be. Mel and Cat were not under her supervision any longer. She knew if she changed the plan; it was because it was necessary.

Art put the Gulf Stream in the air. It was a luxurious plane.

Art came over the intercom, "On our right, you will observe the lovely Melissa poking her nose up to the glass."

Zoe wondered what he was talking about until she looked out the portal and saw Mel sitting in the cockpit of an F35 Jet.

She didn't catch sight of her for more than a few seconds when she dropped as an air-to-air missile flew above her. Zoe ran up to the cockpit.

When she got there, Mel was explaining how the jet was without armament. She couldn't fight back.

One of the Lebanese pilots saw her steal the F35 and went after her. She could only take evasive actions.

The F16 pulled up alongside the Gulf Stream to see the pilot. Once he noticed it was not Hasad's pilot, he dropped back. Everyone in the cockpit knew he'd drop back and shoot the Gulf Stream out of the air.

At the second he dropped back, there was a massive explosion. The F16 went to pieces.

They figured Mel had weapons on board, but that was not the case. Another F35 pulled up alongside. A woman's voice came across the intercom, "Are you ladies all right, in one piece?"

It was Ariella.

Zoe said, "Why, thank you for your service, Ariella. Nice shot."

"Thank you, but I'm in trouble for shooting down that F16. We expected them to follow you, but we hoped to

escort then rather than shoot them down. I guess it was for a good cause, eh?"

Then she said, "I believe your friend is in the F35. Are we going to have to negotiate for it? The brass will not like that."

"Na, you guys can have it. We have no place to store it, anyway. Well, maybe we will ask a little something for it, but I doubt it." Zoe replied, laughing.

They were relieved the Israeli Air Force had their backs.

Art landed the Gulf Stream as planned. When they disembarked, they were ushered back into the same conference room. This time it was only General Levitt, waiting for them. "Good job, you guys! I'm confident you have work to do. How long before we benefit from this endeavor?"

Zoe answered, "Give us a week. It will take us two days to figure out what we have. There's more treasure than we were initially told."

He asked, "Can I call you in two days?"

Zoe said yes and gave him the secure number. She explained how to leave a message and how to get a

response. Then she said, “Use only a burner. Do not call on a company phone. You get one call per phone. Since we blew the safe up, there will be suspicious hackers. They will search for chatter about the contents of the safe. Some other national militaries and nosey covert hackers will listen to the airwaves and mysterious calls, particularly yours.”

Levitt responded, “We’ll keep the chatter down.”

“All right. Now, it will take about a month before most get bored and accept the contents were destroyed, and two months before they all go back to sleep. Our biggest issue is the US, who’s very good about picking information out of thin air. Our real problem we have is changing the ownership of all the assets. Everything we have that belonged to Holstein is still in his name. There are hackers around the world who monitor the assets of people like Holstein. They watch the transfer of those assets from one to another. When there are mass changes of ownership, they get suspicious. We don’t want them getting suspicious.”

Levitt asked, “What do you suggest. How do we move the money and the assets without being found out?”

“First, we need to set up a corporation started by Holstein and move ownership of his assets to that corporation. In this case, because he owns several businesses and corporations already, it will be a consolidation of assets under a single Corporation. That would be a normal activity by a paranoid schizo like Holstein. Then, we can pretend to kill Holstein and leave everything to the Board of the new corporation. We’ll put out rumors it was a disgruntled Palestinian terrorist group. No one will know who for sure. Fear of those kinds of groups is why we will keep the members of the Board secret from the public. All his assets will go to the corporation. I would ask you, General, to make a way for us to set a corporation up here in Israel. That will drive many hostile characters mad and will appear Holstein is changing sides.”

“I’ll look into it, Zoe. Can it wait for a while? Can you operate under your current conditions? We may have an operation in the works that’s much more exciting than this operation, and I don’t want to close that door yet. I don’t want to kill Holstein again, yet.”

“I believe we can last for another year, maybe a little longer before we run into issues. Now, once we have cataloged everything from the safe, and distributed it, we

will fly back and deliver your share. We will leave the Gulf Stream and any local assets here until we return. Can you have a C130 available when we return?”

“We can do that, and if you could provide me with a list, I’ll have my people gather all the assets we agreed upon and place them into the C130 and have it flown to you. Thank you for a job well done. We’re fortunate to have friends like you.”

Ramous thought the General was about to ask them to do something else. He knew it was not the last time he’d call on them.

Aaron was to join them on their trip back to Spain. He wasn’t happy about the reason, but ordered to do so. However, it gave him and Melissa time together. He’d stay with them until they placed the money for Israel.

On the way back to Madrid, they found almost four billion dollars in offshore accounts. Holstein was worth over forty billion dollars. They didn’t find any records showing other stashes, but they found he had almost eight billion invested in banks in Germany and the US, along with a nasty letter about how Germany and the US were tying it all up.

There was an accountant list in the files that listed thirteen different companies and their net worth. Those added up to another twelve billion.

He had another eleven billion in the central bank in Iran, valued in USD.

The deeds and titles to other assets they retrieved added up to almost three and a half-billion dollars. That included the F16 and the F35, which Israel was keeping the F35. Poor Ariella, she had no choice but to put the F16 down.

They already determined the money they would receive would go to help the Gens find new lives. They didn't need that much money and would discuss it before they were ready to distribute it.

By the time they got back to Madrid, Zoe figured they walked away with almost six and a half billion USD. They would return two billion to Israel. Who ever heard of that?

They moved into the hanger in Madrid until they finished washing the money. The group moved all the money into a single Swiss account. Zoe figured that was the best way to keep other governments from asking

questions. They made it look like the Israeli military was merging surplus operating funds.

First, she moved all the money into six separate departmental accounts, and closed the original accounts.

Once done, Zoe hacked the Swiss bank and wiped the original accounts as if they never existed and changed the deposit date of the six accounts to ten months earlier.

The next day she transferred all six accounts into a single account, on behalf of Israel, with the Swiss Bank Unicredit, which had an office in Madrid.

It was the General's and the Prime Minister's intention to keep their share available to its military without other cabinet officials trying to steal it for other purposes.

After that, Zoe forged settlement papers for the purchase, by the Israel government, of a hi-tech company called Meteor Technologies.

If the paperwork looked legitimate, no one at the bank would question the purchase, even though the company never existed.

Those funds from the sale went to a corporation called The Israel Financial Group. It was another dummy

corporation created to hold the funds until they could be redistributed.

Since the money came from Israel, and as long as Israel verifies the purchase and the payment to The Israel Group, everyone was home free.

Zoe gave Aaron all the information to access the two-billion-dollar account with Unicredit.

Israel was now two billion richer. Since no one but Holstein and Hasad knew of the assets, no one else would investigate the matter.

Even though Iran knew there were valuables in the safe, they didn't have a clue what it amounted to. Now, the money was no longer traceable.

Mel mentioned, "No one in the Middle East trusts one another. I'm sure there are other billionaires in other countries hiding their assets, just like Holstein. Imagine if we could take all their money too. I'm sure Israel will back us."

Aaron replied, "I'm sure we would."

Zoe handed Aaron the list of assets with original copies of the deeds and titles. Cat forged sales documents for all but wanted to wait until the corporation was setup to

deliver the sales documents to any government entity. She wanted to put them all under corporate ownership.

The hard part now was collecting all the physical assets, especially since they could use most of the properties in placing the Gens. There were an additional twenty-three properties. One stood out to Mark and Dee, which was a property in St. Martin in the Caribbean. The rest were buildings, warehouses, and homes.

Mel, Cat, and Art would fly back to Israel to pick up the other Gulf Stream III and fly it back to Madrid. Mel wanted to spend time in Israel. They all agreed they didn't need her to resettle the Gens. Perhaps this was her resettlement. Eric planned to go back to the vineyard to join the other Gens.

Before each went their separate way, the group met in the hanger office to discuss the status of the Gens, and how the assets could help them.

There were two full teams in the field and several other specialists elsewhere when the Seattle building was demolished. Four specialists were hackers. They were the best the world offered. There wasn't a system they couldn't hack. Zoe wanted to use them to the Gens advantage. She

told Eric to send them and Julie 8 back to Madrid when he got to the vineyard.

Julie 8 was a team leader, and a banking expert used to infiltrate many of the more clandestine banks around the world.

They hoped Julie could join them to monitor their accounts. Perhaps she might suggest how to invest those monies for maximum profit. They wanted to speak with her and get her input. Also, it depended on whether she was willing. Gens won't be forced to do anything again.

Then Mark told Eric to send Cary 43 back with them. Cary had a photographic memory.

If the group could convince the Gens to work together using their skills to help and protect one another, they'd be a formidable force.

As they were discussing their options and plans, an Israeli C130 rolled up to the hanger. A young Israeli air force officer disembarked and entered the hanger.

The officer said, "I'm looking for a Mr. Mark Hatfield."

"Hi, I'm Mark Hatfield, is the C130 for us?"

"Yes sir, it's full, can we unload it here?"

“Let me see what you have. Then I can tell you where to put it.”

Once the rear hatch was open, Mark gasped. On the end were two luxury helicopters, one a Bell 525 and the other a Sikorsky S-92.

The rest of the cargo included thirteen luxury cars and two motor coaches.

Mark said, “Put the helicopters in the hanger along with the motor coaches. Park the cars on the other side of the hanger. There’s a small marked lot over there.”

Ramous was standing next to Mark while he was directing the placement of the vehicles.

Ramous said, “I hope we have all the titles to these vehicles.”

Mark pulled a list from his shirt pocket and looked for serial numbers and identification on each and compared them to the list.

After twenty minutes of comparing everything to the list, he said, “Yep, we have titles to everything on the plane.”

Mark asked the young officer, “This is only part of what was supposed to be delivered. What about the rest of the assets?”

“Sir, everything that’s not here is distributed throughout the world. We could only bring what we knew about in Lebanon and Syria. Retrieving this stuff caused at least three firefights.”

“I’m sorry, I hadn’t considered that. Thank you for delivering these to us.”

The C130 left an hour later.

Mel, Cat, Art, and Aaron just finished fueling and preparing the Gulf Stream when Mark approached them.

Mark said, “There are too many planes and other equipment to fit into one hanger. I found a larger hanger for sale owned by the Saudis. Aaron, please talk to the General and tell him we’d like to buy it, but we want to put it under ownership of the Israeli government, and then lease it from them for five dollars a month. We could avoid a lot of issues if they would do that for us.”

Aaron said, “You only needed to ask me, Mark. They assigned me to your group for those kinds of things. We understood as private citizens, you might have certain

issues. Let me say Israel is happy to do as you suggest, but we will not pay for it.”

“I didn’t expect that. The price is twenty million. We can transfer the funds to your account today.”

Mark gave the phone number to the particular Saudi who was selling the hanger. He was selling the hanger because there was a death in the family and they were liquidating foreign assets. Aaron called the person responsible for selling the hanger and offered him full asking price.

Things were going well between the Saudis and Israelis, so they completed the deal over the phone. The executor gave Aaron all the passcodes for the new hanger and told him he will fly into Israel and settle the day after next, which gave him and the others time to get back to Israel.

Afterward, Ramous and Mark drove over to the new hanger. It was twice the size of the one they were already using, and it was modern, rich Saudi modern.

Mark said, “This will do nicely.”

Then he turned to Ramous and asked, “I have noticed you have become quiet as of late. Are you all right, Ram?”

“I’ve been observing. It’s not like I was an international spy throughout my life and can jump into an operation without being a hindrance. I’m a simple Police Chief, or was. I did not understand what you guys go through living this life. I have been overwhelmed by Zoe’s capabilities. She’s amazing. For myself, I want to be more involved. I’m not a complete fumbling idiot, and I can be useful.”

“Yes, I understand and agree with you, Ramous. Everything has been happening so fast. It’s even causing my head to spin. You have been so instrumental in bringing us to where we are today. If not for your efforts in the beginning, many of the Gens wouldn’t be alive today.”

“Well, thank you, Mark. I hope I can be useful in the future. There’s still a lot of work to do before everyone is safe.”

“Do you have suggestions, Ram?”

“You are on the right track after what I heard in the office before the C130 arrived. You need to organize the Gens like a corporation. I don’t believe a single Gen can

live without the others. There's just too much expertise between them. You can't let that go to waste or allow them to become isolated. The group certainly has the necessary resources for organizing such an entity and they will always need each other."

"Exactly, you're an insightful guy, Mr. Rignor."

When the two got back to the first hanger, Aaron told them the second hanger was available for use.

Eric came walking by as he was getting ready to leave for the train station when Mark stopped him, "You can fly a helicopter, right?"

"Of course, we all can. Are you asking because you're going to let me fly back to the vineyard?"

"You're too clever, young man. Yes. There's no need for you to spend a full day on the train when you can be there in a matter of two hours. Fuel up the 525 and take it. Then I want you to turn it over to Julie, Cary, and the four hackers. Send them back as soon as you get there, okay?"

Eric responded, "Right, thanks."

Bring in the Experts

After Art, Mel, Cat, and Aaron left for Israel, and Eric left for Tuscany, the rest of the group spent the afternoon moving vehicles into the new hanger.

They planned to leave them there until they could register the titles. Once they created a legitimate corporation, they could put all the vehicles and all other titles under that name.

Ten minutes after they moved the vehicles to the new hanger, and returned to the old one, the six specialists arrived in the Bell helicopter.

Mark asked Julie, Cary, and the hackers to join them in the office.

Once everyone took a seat, he turned to Julie and asked her about her assignments related to Europe, specifically about her involvement in certain banks that handled clandestine accounts.

She said, “I have infiltrated several of the main branches of several banks, and specifically, I’m well known by the President of Silica Bank, an Italian bank in Geneva, Switzerland. I assume you want to hide a considerable amount of money, right?”

“Yes, and we need you to infiltrate any one of those banks so we can move money around without suspicion. Can you do that?”

“Of course, I will do that for you. Six years ago, I was sent in to infiltrate Silica Bank within its Swiss office. We were investigating the finances of a man by the name Carlo Santiago. He was a billionaire who owned a casino in Portugal. He was a mobster and had several US citizens murdered. One was a congressman from Idaho. I was brought in as an acting VP of operations to President Nicola Bernardi, by the US government. Portugal wanted Carlo out of business because he had too much influence with the government there. At least half of the government was under his thumb. Portugal asked the US if they could deal with Carlo on their behalf. The US could have assassinated him, but one of his soldiers would have stepped up and taken his place. So, the best way to deal with him, before they assassinated him, was to wipe out his bank accounts. No money, no heirs. They gave me all the

security credentials, and access to every system used by the bank. As I was there, Nicola approached me, asking me if I could help him with another issue. A local politician was blackmailing him. Mr. Bernardi was skimming the accounts to the tune of one hundred million dollars. The politician's accountant caught him and the discrepancies. It was minor how it related to that politician's account, but a discrepancy nonetheless. He started blackmailing Nicola for a large amount of money.”

Ramous let out a big yawn.

To which she replied, “Am I boring you, sir?”

“Not at all, I find this interesting.”

“Okay, I'll condense the story. I suspect it must be someone's nap time.”

“No. You're good.”

“Let me make a long boring story short, I took care of President Bernardi's problem. I made it look like a banking error and we distributed all the money back to the rightful owners. That distribution included all the money Nicola had skimmed and nine hundred million belonging to Carlo. I sent fifty million to Nicola, provided he did me a favor in the future. I have him in my pocket, and despite

that, he's a good friend, and we like each other. Those entities affected by the skimming were grateful for the windfall. Behind closed doors, they praised Nicola and the Silica Bank, which generated several new accounts. So, I'd love to go back and work with him, but I need to call and tell him what I need."

"Was that quick enough for you, Sir?"

"My name is Ramous, and I found your story interesting. Please forgive me if I appeared to be bored. I was not. I'm ready for more, if there's more."

"Oh, by-the-way there are billions of dollars that flow through his bank without question, and it has a fantastic reputation for being discreet. Since Mr. Ramous is now a fan, I can explain what happened to Carlo. We put Carlo Santiago out of business and delivered his business to the Portugal government. They now own and operate the casino. His own people later murdered him. So, how much are we talking about?"

Zoe said, "We have just over three billion dollars. Also, we're managing two billion for the Israeli military. Currently, we have those funds in Swiss, concealed accounts, with Unicredit Bank. If Bernardi is as indebted to you as you say, wouldn't it be prudent to move all our

funds into his bank as soon as possible? You could disburse our funds into smaller accounts that would bring less attention, but you won't have to do so with the Israelis. You can put their funds into one account. They'll run their own interference. I wish we had talked two days ago."

Julie answered, "That's no problem. I can call him right now if you like."

Mark said, "Use the office next door. There are several burner phones in the desk, in the right top drawer. Julie, this is a big commitment you will be making. If you have different plans, you need to back out now. It's your choice."

"Mark and friends, I can do this from wherever I live. Since I don't have to be in a specific place to access your accounts and manage them. Once I decide where I plan to live, you can just set me up with the equipment and security I need. Then you can send anyone of these four boys in to get me situated. We've all worked together in the past."

She left to call her friend Nicola.

After she left the room, Mark directed his attention toward the hackers, "How are you guys? You heard that. Can you get Julie setup?"

The shortest one, Dennis, the one that looked like a fourteen-year-old kid, stood up and said, “No problem, we have done it several times.”

The other three agreed as they discussed the process and the equipment they needed.

Mark interrupted, “Guys. That’s not what we contacted you for. First, I want to ask if you had made plans once you leave Tuscany?”

Nick, the one sitting next to Dennis, said, “We figured we would start a tech company. We didn’t know what was available to us yet.”

Mark said, “Okay, that’s great. When we get the corporation set up, we want to contract with your company for our IT services. It’s our plan once the corporation is up and viable to hire all the Gens. We plan to do it in such a way so everyone can live anywhere they want and work for us. At least everyone will have shares in the company. We’ve considered anyone who wants to start a business as a subsidiary of the corporation. I assume many want to settle and not worry about business other than the business of their garden. That’s okay too. Like I said, everyone will have shares in the corporation. The interest alone will make everyone wealthy. So, for example, if you wanted to run a

bakery, we can set you up in business under our umbrella. Your computer company will be a subsidiary. All pertinent companies will be international and owned by the parent company, when and wherever we establish it. Do you understand?”

Chuck, the tallest and previous supervisor of the four, said, “Yes. That’s perfect. We have talked about it, and we plan to stay in Europe. We talked about establishing ourselves in Denmark. Is that possible?”

Mark answered, “Anywhere you guys like.”

The other three started an argument with Chuck about who was deciding to live in Denmark.

Mark quickly ended the argument and said, “There’s one other thing. We need to re-establish communications. Right now, we have a hub in New York where all our private calls are routed. It’s in a storage unit in Brooklyn. It will suffice for a little while longer, but we need you to set up a new secure communications center where we can contact one another without mishap. We want it done outside the US. We need to bounce the signal from places like South Africa or Argentina, places that if they traced it, it would only lead them to a relay system. We want to use several redundant relay systems around the

world. You could set the main system up in Denmark, should you live there, but get Julie setup first.”

After that, Mark turned to Cary, “Hello, young lady. I’m always happy to see you.”

Dee reached over and slapped him lightly on the back of the head, “Quit flirting!”

“Okay! Okay!”

He winked at Cary and said, “What can you tell me about the status of our Gens? Have you been talking with them about aliases?”

Cary had the most fantastic photographic memory of all the Gens. In her mind, she knew every detail about everyone. After the group left Tuscany, she started talking with the other Gens gathering information. Cary was always involved in operations that required a great deal of memorization. Every Gen trusted her, knowing that she kept things to herself. She was responsible for creating identification and supporting information for operatives in the field, and tied it together so perfectly, no one could prove a person wasn’t who they said they were. Anyone else often forget one detail or another, but not her. Other’s forgetfulness, on more than one occasion, caused an operation to fail because an operative was found out for

lack of supporting documentation. But she never had that problem with her work.

Cary answered, “I have been talking and gathering information, but there are several who haven’t decided what they plan to do. They were excited at first until they realized there was no plan on how you guys will make it all happen, and it’s not that they can’t figure out how to survive on their own, but you should have told them how much money you have available for resettlement. That would have gone a long way helping them make those decisions.”

Zoe said, “We didn’t have all that money until just two days ago. We had enough money for everyone to have a new life, but not in a way we can now. We plan to use one and a half billion for the Gens to create new lives. That’s more than they need for the rest of their lives. The interest alone on that kind of money should provide about two million dollars to each person per year.”

Cary answered, “Let me go back and explain to the Gens what the situation is now. I’m sure over the next couple of weeks we can establish placement and new identifications for everyone. No one responded in the past because it was unclear how we planned to accomplish

that, and we need to get moving because the neighbors are getting too nosey.”

Mark asked, “Do you have all the equipment you need to create new identities?”

“We have what we need to print physical identifications, but we will need our hacker friends to hack agencies and hospitals to create electronic files.”

“Okay. Go back and relay the situation to the rest of the Gens. We will need the hackers here until we can get Julie setup. At which time we will send them back to you.”

William, the fourth hacker, spoke up, “It will only take one of us to set Julie up, maybe two. We don’t need the apron strings of each other to do these kinds of things. Most of the time, we work solo. So, you can send Dennis and Chuck back with Cary.”

Chuck retorted, “Shut up! Will, I prefer to work on the banking system. You and Dennis can go back with Cary, Nick and I’ll stay here.”

Will argued, “Why can’t you send Nick and Dennis back with Cary? I prefer to work on the bank system rather than government documents.”

Chuck looked at Dennis and Nick.

Nick answered, “I don’t care, either is fine.”

Then Dennis said, “Me either.”

Chuck said, “Okay, Mark, I guess that’s settled. We can use the computers that are there now to do things like print legal documents, but we will need better equipment to do anything else. The old machines do have internet access but they’re outdated. If there ever was a computers in 1950s, most of the PCs there could be their European cousins. So, we will need to shop for equipment for Tuscany and the banking system too. Can we purchase the needed equipment now?”

Mark turned to Dee, “Can you take these hacks around to the computer store and help them out?”

“I’d love to, Hon.”

Dee and the hackers took the van to purchase the equipment for both projects.

In the meantime, Julie returned to the office, telling the group things were good with her and her friend.

“He will do whatever I need him to do. So, I’m now a Vice President in charge of operations for the Rome Branch. You should see my salary. On the downside, the first thing I have to do is demote a fellow employee. They

can be dangerous in situations like this, always trying to cause problems out of anger. I'll end up firing him."

Cary asked, "Got anything to eat, Mark? I'm hungry."

After she said that, they all stood around looking at each other as if someone should magically produce dinner.

There was only an empty fridge in the hanger. They didn't want to bring any attention to themselves by all of them going to a restaurant, so Zoe went into the supermarket to buy hotdogs, skewers, and fixings.

Someone set a 55-gallon barrel on the side of the hanger and built a fire in it previously. It was time for a hot dog roast. Cary built the fire, mainly because she likes fires. Zoe returned just as Dee and the hackers got back. So, they set a table up next to the barrel with all the fixings for their hot dog roast.

Cary looked around at everyone and said, "We are such typical Americans. New lives will take getting used to."

Ramous, although quiet through most of the conversations, expressed an idea. "I want to toss this out there and see where it lands. When we, well you, finished

the mission for the Israelis, I was sure the General was going to ask you to do something else. I could tell it was right on the tip of his tongue. Although he didn't, I'm confident he will. We will miss an opportunity here if we don't use it to our advantage."

Mark asked, "What do you mean, Ram?"

Dee interrupted, "Ram is on the right track. Why establish identities all over the world when we can establish everyone in Israel with the help of the Israeli government? We can offer our services, and they can offer us citizenship. I suspected the same, Ram. I could tell it was right on the tip of his tongue. Since Israel is full of immigrants, it would be easy to get us established as Israeli citizens. I hope I didn't steal your thunder, Ram, but I wanted the group to understand that you and I were thinking along the same lines, right?"

"Exactly, Dee, it's an easy decision."

Chuck, the tall hacker, spoke up, "That would be so easy to do, especially if we had unfettered access to their systems."

Cary agreed and could create identities for everyone based on Israeli citizenship.

They asked Mark to talk with Aaron and the General the next morning.

They all agreed, just before Zoe broke out the marshmallows.

Dee asked Zoe, "Did you buy stuff for S'mores?"

"It's all in the bag, Dee."

There was so much going on, no one thought about staying the night. So, Ramous and Mark drove over to the new hanger and brought the two coaches back so everyone could have a place to sleep.

Zoe and Ramous stayed out at the fire late into the night. It was nice and quiet, and it seemed the fire comforted them. They had been moving and thinking at such a high pace for several days. It was nice to relax, even if it was just a fire to watch in a barrel.

Zoe whispered to Ramous, "I can imagine this fire burning on the beach right now."

"Me too, Hon. Do you remember that first night we sat on the beach, and I put my arm around you?"

"Yes. That was the night I fell in love with you."

"I think that night start it all for you and I. I wish we were sitting on that beach right now."

“Are you ready to return to Oregon?”

“I don’t know. I have been so caught up in things since we came back, that I haven’t thought about it. Actually, I find myself wondering if we will ever go back. Perhaps I should give the property to Peter and Emily and start a new life at the vineyard. I’ll never go back as police chief. Maggie has already proved herself to the city. They might like her better than me. Just like you said, I’m beginning to feel out of touch with Oregon.”

“Ram, maybe, once we get Julie set up, we can make a casual trip back. We could take our time, instead of hurrying. I would enjoy that. We can walk on the beach, build a real campfire, and see how it makes us feel. Right now, the feeling is soft, and warm.”

The two of them kept the fire going for another hour while they discussed what kind of life they wanted live if they didn’t go back to Oregon. There was so much money and so many properties. They could live anywhere.

Ramous asked Zoe if she could teach him how to fly. Everyone else knew how, except him.

She reminded him there were a lot of things everyone else could do that he couldn’t.” Of course,” she said it while giggling.

To Ramous, she was so beautiful when she giggled, but then he thought she was beautiful all the time.

His life has changed in so many ways he could never have imagined, all because of Zoe. He was always in charge, and that's the way he has lived his whole life. Now, he was following everyone else and often had to stand behind the action because of his limited abilities, compared to the Gens. He needed to figure out how he could be more involved. Standing back did not work for him and never has.

The Next Operation

In the morning Mark called Aaron and asked if he could put him in touch with the General. When he explained why and what he had planned to ask, Aaron became excited and wondered why he hadn't thought of it himself.

Aaron asked, "Do you mind if I present this idea to the General? I know him pretty well."

"I thought you'd never ask. Get back to me as soon as you get an answer. We have a group eager to get back to Tuscany with that information."

"I will do it right now and call you back."

Dee got up before everyone and went to the local supermarket. She purchased small appliances and food stuff to make waffles for breakfast. She got back just as Mark finish speaking with Aaron. So, she and Mark set up folding tables and chairs for everyone to sit. The smell of coffee filled the hanger, bringing everyone out of

hibernation. They all made their way to the tables, now full of fruit, pastry, and coffee.

“Sit down everyone, there’s more where this came from,” Dee said as she set a platter of waffles on the table.

You would have thought the hackers were starving, because no sooner did she set the waffles down, they emptied the platter. There was a flash of light and blue traces, and the platter was empty.

After breakfast, Ramous and Mark serviced the Bell 525 so Cary could make a trip back to Tuscany. They were waiting for Aaron to call so she could leave and soon became disheartened, expecting to have heard from him before the afternoon. They took the coaches back to the new hanger, and just as they were getting ready to head back, the phone rang. It was Aaron. He sounded disappointed. Ramous could tell by the look on Mark’s face that the news was not good, but Mark’s face transformed when Aaron told him the General agreed. He and Aaron spent the next twenty minutes discussing the details. Mark and Ramous were excited to learn the General’s response. When they got back to the hanger, Mark gave the rest of the group the news.

He said, “Cary, the General is sending six of his staff to work with you. Nick and Dennis, the General is also sending IT staff to work with you as well. So, go back to Tuscany and get to work.”

“Mark, we don’t have the equipment in Tuscany to perform all the necessary work. We will probably need to go into Israel to make this happen.”

“Discuss that with the team the General is sending. I assume they can at least get you started, right?”

“I guess, but I don’t know.”

Cary and the hackers left within the hour.

Next, they needed to get Julie set up. Mark asked her where she wanted to establish herself. She was hired to manage the Rome branch, and she always loved Rome. So Rome it was! Julie and the other two hackers loaded up a van and left for Rome. Mark sent her and the techs even though they didn’t have a place to stay. He told them they needed to find and rent an apartment or home.

About an hour after they left, Dee reminded him of a large villa in Rome they acquired during the last operation. They hadn’t transferred the title yet, but it was

available. He called Julie and gave her the address and told her she could live there. She responded, “Problem solved.”

Zoe was worried things were going too smoothly. She was not used to that. With every operation, there were always issues which needed to be dealt with. That was her expertise, and she was disoriented at the moment. She called Mark, Dee, and Ramous into the office, “I’m not used to things going this well. We need to review our situation and find what we’re missing. Are we being too sloppy? It’s like everything is falling into our hands. Usually, when that happens in an operation, we’re being set up.”

Mark answered, “You’re right, Zoe, things have been falling into place rather easily, and we need to tighten things up. One area where we need more expertise before we find ourselves in trouble is legitimate legal counsel. We have no real professional legal representation. All of us are trained in legal work, but not one of us is licensed, and it seems to be a glaring issue, for me anyway. If we don’t find a resolution, we’re going to come up against a wall we can’t scale.”

Dee said, “I agree. I have been thinking of that myself. We need a person who can deal with any potential

legal issues. There's a lot of money and assets changing hands. One slipup and it could all come crashing down on us."

Zoe jumped in, "I recommend we approach Silver Durant and ask him to help us out. We can put him on retainer. I have a feeling he would do that for us."

Once Zoe mentioned Silver, it was like a heavy burden lifted from their shoulders. No one else even considered Silver. It was decided that Ramous should contact Mike and get Durant's number and call him. The Group hoped they could hire him to put a name on all their legal issues they couldn't do for themselves because no one was licensed. Any Gen could handle filing legal documents, but there were those things that needed that extra touch.

Ramous spent a greater part of the following day talking with Mike. The rest of the group spent it going over the required paperwork to start the new corporation. They gave up around noon, because they hit a dead end. Without Israeli citizenship, they were just spinning their wheels.

That night Mark received a call with an update from Cary. She said, "Everyone's excited about becoming Israeli citizens. They were excited when I told them about

the financial situation. Ms. Rachel Katz called me today. I suggested we fly into Tel Aviv next week and do the work there. She was already going to suggest that. What do you think?"

"There's no problem as long as you have all the information you need. Do you have all the Gens information?"

"Yes, except you guys. I don't have information on any of you regarding what you're planning on doing?"

"Fly back here this week before you go to Tel Aviv, and we will work it out. I want Julie's done first, and when you set down to do the work, I want you to put us in next, so we can finish the paperwork to form the corporation. How long will it take you to create the identification for the six of us?"

"It will only take a couple hours, initially, for the six of you. It should only take Twenty minutes to establish technical citizenship per individual, and two to three hours to add all the particulars. Give us a day, two at most."

"All right, that'll work."

"You know, Mark, the exciting part about all of this is we didn't have to change anyone's name. Everyone can

use their actual name. So, once the electronic piece is complete, it won't matter what anyone calls themselves. It only mattered that at some point in their past they migrated to Israel and were given citizenship. Before that, it doesn't matter where they came from. We'll stagger their entry so no one will be part of a mass migration. We have already created birth certificates from different countries around the world, mostly from the Ukraine. The Hackers will still need to establish electronic birth certificates in most of those countries. They have done about a third of them already. These guys are fast. At this speed, they'll have that part finished by tomorrow morning. Afterward, I only need to have them put the finishing touches on the electronic files once we get to Israel. Don't say anything, but all three of us have covertly worked in the Israeli system in the past."

"What? Is anyone going to recognize you?"

"No. It was behind the scenes. Oh, one last thing, what about Mr. Rignor, I don't know if he plans to get a new identification."

"I don't think he's planning on it, but you can talk to him about that when you get here."

"Okay, see you Saturday."

Right after she hung up, Julie called, “Mark, the home in Rome is such a beautiful villa, and it’s only eight kilometers outside Rome, in San Felice Circeo. It should work for me. Can I have it?”

“We can work on that, Julie, and that shouldn’t be a problem. We’re all going to deal with those kinds of things when the time is right. I just got off the phone with Cary. She’s coming in Saturday, and you will need to be here on Sunday so she can create your ID. See you on Sunday?”

“Yes, I’ll see you on Sunday. Goodbye. Oh, I need a car. Driving the van will not work for me.”

“Okay, when you come on Sunday you can pick one out to drive back. We have several to choose from.”

“Thanks, Mark. See you Sunday.”

Since the Group was spending most of their time at the hanger, everyone revisited Zoe’s recommendation and agreed to purchase two homes close to the airport. So, Dee and Zoe spent the week looking for homes to buy. They were looking for houses large enough to sleep sixteen people.

Dee and Zoe couldn’t have been more different, deciding what they needed. One liked particulars about a

residence, and the other didn't. After the fifth house, Zoe gave in and told Dee to pick out the houses, and she would be quiet about it.

On Saturday, while Ramous and Mark were standing out front of the hanger discussing whether Ramous wanted to change his ID, Cary returned in the 525, and before the blades even stopped, two Gulf Streams rolled up to the hanger, followed by a C130J.

Cat and Art exited from the two Gulf Streams, and the same young Israeli Officer exited from the C130J.

Mark shouted, "Welcome back team. You brought a friend?"

Art answered, "Yes, we did. The General has been busy fulfilling his word to get all our assets to us."

The young officer handed Mark the manifest. Mark ran back into the office and grabbed his list. The plane was carrying three more motor coaches, a dozen vehicles and three more helicopters. Once the gate was down, it became quiet. Ramous caught his first glimpse of the two helicopters.

The young officer came and stood next to him and said, "Those are very nice and very expensive helicopters.

The one on the left is a Sikorsky S-76C, the one on the right is a Bell 525 Relentless. The one in the back, which we put in first because the crew didn't know about the rest of the vehicles, is an AugustaWestland AW101 VVIP, and it's one of the most luxurious helicopters I have ever seen."

Just as the young soldier said that, General Levitt came walking down the ramp. Ramous greeted him and directed him toward the hanger. As Mark came out, the two bumped into one another. The General turned back to the plane and pointed as he said to Mark, "I keep my promises. I believe this brings us up to one half of the equipment we promised you."

Mark answered, "That sounds about right."

The General asked, "Can we talk somewhere private, please?"

Mark led him to the office and the rest of the group followed. Once in the office, the General took a seat and explained, "We need your help again. We're not done with Holstein. He still has cash and other assets stashed throughout the world. The fascinating part about all of this is no one other than Israel, and your group knows he's dead. We had several operatives who have taken up as Mr. Holstein, since the first time we killed him, and have been

intercepting every form of correspondence he's received sense. Holstein has eight billion USD in the US and Germany, and he has eleven billion in the Central Bank in Iran. Israel has convinced the US and Germany to release the money after we told them it would help in an operation that we've devised to neutralize him. So, they have agreed when we're ready to release those funds, but we will need you ready to transfer those funds on Holstein's behalf when they're released. Both the US and Germany tend to forget about stuff once they no longer control it. You know, out of sight, out of mind?"

Dee said, "That's a lot of money."

"Yes, it is. Three days ago, I received a call from some important people, who told me that both countries were at a point they had no legal reason to hold the funds. They will give those funds up in a matter of two months. That's perfect timing for us because they figured it was better to turn it over to us, to use in an operation to take Holstein out, rather than give it back to him. Our problem after giving you all that unnecessary background information is the eleven million sitting in Iran. The problem is, if we or the US relieve them of those funds, there will be an audit trail. That's because neither one of us is as good as your group pulling off a pickpocket like this.

The money belongs to a dead man, and it's better to remove it before Iran finds out, who will then use it for terrorist activities. We'll give you a share. Can you do that for us?"

Mark answered, "Yes, we can. What share?"

"How about two hundred and fifty American dollars? Does that sound like a fair share?"

"Sure, we can do it for a hundred fifty bucks, but you need to pay us in advance."

"We know, I know, you could do it yourselves with no one's help. You don't need us, we need you, but we can make the money available much faster, we can wash it for you. I know, because I'm a Second Gen just like you, it could take years for you to clean that much money moving it around. We can do it with one quick stroke of the pen. Once the operation is complete, we were thinking of buying another business of yours for three billion dollars. We'll even create the business and value it for you. How does that sound? There won't be a country or an agency that could refute how clean the money would be. And I'm happy to say, as Israeli citizens, there will be no tax liabilities. That guarantee is good all the way to the Prime Minister."

Ramous interjected, "What you're saying is we will deliver to you nineteen billion dollars, and you will allow

us to keep three? Our fee should be more like six billion, don't you agree?"

The General laughed, and said, "Who said humans don't have a pair? I want to offer you six billion, but that's the limit. Think of us as a young nation and trying to keep our feet. That money will provide for our growing military, which we need to survive. Six billion, it is. Will you do it?"

Mark asked, "When do you need this done?"

"We'd like to get started next week, the US, and Germany will release the funds on Tuesday. It will only hit one or two backwoods newspapers, but once Iran hears about the release, they might lock the eleven billion up in their bank before we can transfer it."

Zoe said, "We have two hackers in Tel Aviv right now. Either of them could hack into Iran's central bank and relieve them of those funds. My best banking expert is in Rome, but she has four counterparts in Tuscany right now. I'll bring the four of them here today. And we can go over the details. Anyone of them is more than capable, with our banker in Rome, to relieve those funds from Iran without a trace. When we're done, the money will be gone, and no one in their Central Bank will be able to find it."

Cat said, "I can do it myself, Zoe."

Mark said, “I want the rest of the Gens to get involved, so they’re not just sitting on their behinds. They’re getting bored and starting to complain.”

The General said, “However it’s done is up to you. Mark, we will need to move those assets to Venezuela. I neglected to tell you that. We need to hack them from there. Is that a problem? That idiot President of Venezuela is chummy with Iran. If they even trace the money, let them trace it to him. They can fight about it, and perhaps Iran will take him out, which would be good for the country, in my opinion.”

Everyone laughed.

Mark said, “That sounds like a bonus.”

Cat asked, “Do you want us to make it look like Venezuela took the money? We can do that if you like. Venezuela’s banking system is a joke. You’d think middle school kids set it up. Well, forgive me, I didn’t mean to insult middle school kids.”

“No, I prefer you don’t leave any trace of who took it. We chose Venezuela only because if they should trace it, we want the trail to end there. It’s only a security precaution.”

Mark said, “All right, we’ll set the team up there. In the meantime, let’s bring everyone on board.”

After the meeting, Mark had the C130J make its way to the new hanger where they unloaded it and sent it, along with General Levitt, on its way.

Julie was coming in on Sunday. Mark asked her to bring her team when she came. She and her team met with Cary first thing Sunday morning. He planned to speak to that afternoon about the operation and receipting the additional nineteen billion dollars into concealed accounts. He explained what the operation was and gave them the deadline. The plan was for her team to leave for Venezuela on Monday and setup by Wednesday. Julie was to return to Rome and monitor the US and German release of Holstein’s money, and once it takes place, relay the pertinent information to her team in Venezuela. They would then act on behalf of Holstein and transfer the released funds from the US and Germany to a fake account she created on behalf of Hezbollah. That was the intended plan in which Israel suggested to both the US and Germany. They expected Holstein to withdraw those monies once they’re released.

Levitt told both the US and Germany it was their intention to trace the withdrawal. That would give them Holstein's location and they could respond with a task force to arrest him, or terminate him. Once Israel completed the operation, they would notify the US and Germany whether the plan was successful.

It was Israel's intention to tell them Holstein was killed in the process. As soon as Israel reported to the US and Germany that he was dead, Julie would transfer the money into a secure account under the name General Mohamad Ziad, using a Swiss account that neither country could access. Both countries will have to accept the money was taken by Hezbollah. Both the US and Germany could only retreat because they had no real control of the money in the first place, other than restricting access.

Israel will say they're going after the group, and both countries will wish them success in their endeavor to eliminate the terrorist group and recover the money. Israel will fain anger over the transfer, but admit there was nothing they could do about it. The General would go before the media and promise to bring Hezbollah to its knees.

In the meantime, the team will monitor the Iranian Central Bank as they tried to move the eleven billion into a more secure account. They were counting on Iran to take those measures once the US and Germany released their funds.

They were right. Once the news reached Iran, the President ordered the bank to move the money into another account so he could gain access to it. He actually created a personal account and tried to transfer it there. Once the transfer was issued, the team intercepted it and rerouted it to another fake Swiss Account under a similar name of the President of Venezuela. As far as it concerned the Iranians, the money just disappeared in transit without a trace. The leader of Iran couldn't say anything, because it would have appeared that he was trying to steal it.

The team left clues to make it look like Holstein planned for the money to disappear beforehand, to protect his assets from being stolen by unscrupulous people after he was dead. It made the Iranian leadership angry, but, again, there was nothing they could do about it. So, they went on national television saying they planned to wipe Israel from the face of the map for killing their friend Holstein. The plan went off without a hitch. Julie moved

the money into several smaller accounts for the group and another account for the Israelis.

The following Saturday Mark received a call from General Levitt, who said, “Mark, you guys are amazing. We, again, want to thank you for your service to Israel. The Prime Minister sends his regards and appreciation.”

“The operation was a windfall for both of us, Sir. Now, I want to talk to you about two corporations you said you would set up for us. We have so much property we need to make legitimate so we can use it.”

“Oh, man, Mark! I’m so sorry. We set up two companies which you sold to Israel and a third to receive those funds for your operation. I expected Aaron to give you that information. I’ll chew him out. Regarding him, he’s lost in love. I can’t pry him and that woman, Melissa, apart.

“Go to this website and you will find everything you need to get the ball rolling. You will find information about the two companies we bought from you there. Let me give you their names. One is the tech company called Meteor Technologies, with several government contracts worth billions. We purchased that company for two and a half billion. The second is a property management group

called Green Properties. It owned several large sections of land and manages most of the public land in Israel. We purchased that company for five billion. We ended up purchasing land we already owned. Again, you will find all the details on the website. Oh, it's a secure website, and the access is: 'thegroup' is the login and 'ourgoodfriends' is the password. Now, we purchased both companies from the third company, The Israel Financial Group. We had our experts, and you can make necessary changes if you need or want to, set up the company as a multibillion-dollar company with all the information to make it appear it was a large corporation, established in 1987. I was told you were setting up a dummy corporation under that name. The Israeli government did that for you as well. I hope this will solve your problem and you won't have to worry about doing it yourself"

"Thanks, General, you have saved us a lot of work and worry about setting it up ourselves, although I can't tell you how badly my butt hurts from sitting down and doing all that paperwork."

"What paperwork was that, Mark?"

“Don’t worry about it. I’m going to collect everyone and review the site once I’m off the phone. Have a wonderful day, General. Thank you.”

“No, Mark, thank you, and have a great day too. Talk to you soon. Goodbye.”

Next, Mark called Julie and explained the conversation he had with General Levitt. He gave her the information regarding the website and asked her to do what was necessary to move all the money into the company, the Israel Financial Group, Inc.

She explained how she put most into concealed accounts but left two hundred million in a company account with records back to 1987, as a startup. She asked if he could send her assistants to join her in Rome because there will be a lot of input, and she was busy at the bank.

He agreed.

On Monday, Everyone at the hanger went to work transferring deeds and titles to the ownership of The Israel Financial Group, Inc.. Cat established most of the real property with an earlier purchase date, making it appear the financial group had owned them for years. Once interested parties gave up on the assets, the Group had no problem transferring titles to the Corporation.

It took several weeks to get everything registered under their new corporation. Although the Group held almost nine billion in company stock owned by Mr. Holstein, they hadn't done anything with it. Julie went snooping around and found several accounts established with Bank CIC Switzerland, where dividends were being paid to Holstein.

Those account balances were holding over four billion dollars from ten years of deposits. There have been occasional draws by Holstein. Otherwise there has been no activity other than accumulating interest. They contacted General Levitt and told him about the accounts and the stocks.

Levitt asked, "Is there any way we can access those accounts?"

Mark answered, "Not only can we access them, we can sell the stock to the tune of nine billion dollars. We can dump them on the US and European stock markets, but we need to ration the offerings. General, we could have done this ourselves without worrying how we washed the money, but we decided it was unfair for us not to include you, and we're thinking if you're interested we could send

two-hundred-fifty US dollars your way. How does that work for you?”

“We would have helped for half that. So, yeah, let’s get busy!”

“How does fifty-fifty work, but you need to run interference for us again, particularly security? There will be another thirteen billion to divide up between us.”

“We can do that for you, Mark. Fifty percent is generous. Especially when we didn’t know what was available. Tell me when you plan to do this.”

“We can get started tomorrow. The only other person besides us who knows the money is there is the account manager by the name of Alvin Schubert, with Bank CIC Switzerland. He and the accounts are in Zurich. According to the records, Schubert has not looked at the account for over a year. Our banker, Julie, said she can process the transfer paperwork tomorrow, and have it transferred to another branch in Paris. During that time, she will intercept any and all correspondence from the Zurich branch to the Credit Mutual CIC in Paris, and act as the new account manager with Credit Mutual. The money will take a detour in transit, the Zurich branch will forget about it, the Paris branch won’t even know it’s coming, and we

should have the money, four billion dollars, in seven days. While we do that, we'll send a memo to the financial group, Alrich Investors, Inc. in Boston, Massachusetts, who are handling Holstein's stock investments and inform them he sold his stock to the Israel Finance Group, Inc. before he died. Alrich is a German branch bank within the US."

"So, what kind of security did you need from us?"

"I'll get there. Since this is a private matter, the US will not get involved, but the bank will fight us tooth and nail until they have proof. That's what we want them to do. When they do so, they will hold all dividends until we settle the matter, and won't send any more dividends to Holstein's account in Zurich. By doing so, CIC could open an investigation. We'll ask them to give us time to get the proper paperwork together, and they will have no choice. We'll wait three months before we send the sales documents to Alrich. Three months will give us time to set up our legal team, who we will send in with the rest of the paperwork to settle. This will be fun."

"Mark, this is a great story, and you know we will help however we can. Just tell me what you need."

"Okay, General, we will need documentation from the Israeli government to support the sale and purchase of

the stock, official seals with proper paperwork. They'll expect a manager from a reputable bank in Israel who had witnessed the sale. Someone they can get in contact with should they need to, and they will check that person out. If you have anyone you can trust who will help, bring them on board. That will be important to our success.”

“All right, I have a high-profile bank President in mind. He's worked undercover for me before. I'll check out the situation and call you back in three hours, after I have talked with him. Goodbye, Mark.”

After the call, Mark pulled both Ramous and Zoe into the office.

“Ramous, I haven't talked to you since you called Mike Davies. What resulted from that phone call?”

“Zoe and I had planned on making a trip back to Oregon, after Julie was up and running, to see if we fit in any longer. I asked Mike to invite Silver to my hotel in Oregon for a meeting. I explained what we were looking for, but I preferred to talk to him face to face. Mike just called me back twenty minutes ago and said Silver wants to meet with us.”

“Do you have proper ID to get through customs?”

“Mark, we already talked about that. We’ve been flying in and out of the states as the Rignor couple. Zoe has already established herself as my wife. So, I have no reason to change my name since no one is after me any longer. We thanked Cary for asking, but there was no need to change who we are.”

“All right, take the Gulf Stream G550. When do you plan to leave?”

“We want to leave tomorrow morning. You don’t need us for anything, so that will be a good time for us to go.”

“Okay, bring me a couple jars of Oregon Marionberry jam when you come back. I’ve heard it’s fantastic.”

“It is. We’ll bring you a case.”

The couple left the next morning for Oregon.

Legal Counsel

They landed at the Hillsboro airport, rented a car, and arrived at the bed-and-breakfast at 4 AM.

There was a new clerk at the front desk who had never met Ramous. She asked them if they had a reservation and she would charge them for the night if they wanted a room.

Ramous asked if the lighthouse was available. She said it was not.

Emily came walking out from the kitchen. She hurried over and hugged both Ramous and Zoe.

“Hi you guys! Why didn’t you tell me you were coming?”

“Well, we like surprises. Is the lighthouse suite vacant tonight?”

“Yes, it’s empty until the next week, but we can move those people to another room if you like.”

“That would be great. We’re tired and need to get to sleep. Mike and another friend will be here this afternoon, and I want to be alert when we meet.”

“Ramous, Zoe, please meet Silvia, our new night auditor, clerk.”

Silvia was embarrassed she didn’t know who Ramous was. They greeted each other. Afterward, Ramous and Zoe went up to the suite and then to bed.

They both slept until noon. When they came downstairs, Peter was waiting for them. When he saw them, he hurried over and gave them both a hug.

“Ram, do you want to go up to the office and go over the books?”

“I guess we can do that.”

Zoe stayed downstairs and joined Emily in the kitchen.

As they entered the room, Peter said, “Sit, Ram, we have been doing great, we have been doing seventy thousand a month which is sixty thousand over your requirement. Emily is an excellent manager. She’s keeping the place full, and we’re getting married. Next, I’m thinking you should invest those revenues in property.

There are several properties along the coast for sale. Some of them could rent for upwards of four hundred a night. There's one I'm interested in buying. It sits just behind the Blue Gull Inn in Canon beach. It's a white two-story home with a guest house on the property."

Ramous cut in, "I love that house. I have been keeping an eye on it myself. What are they asking for it?"

He responded, "They're asking nine hundred fifty thousand for the property. So far, our year-to-date revenues are up around six hundred thousand after expenses and projected taxes. I'm certain we'll exceed nine hundred fifty thousand before the end of the year. So, what do you think?"

Ramous mused about how that kind of money was like pocket change now. He expected between him and Zoe; they had just over two billion dollars.

Ramous said, "Do it, Peter, you already have the power of attorney. Go ahead, and make those kinds of decisions, do what needs to be done. Don't worry about asking me. There are a lot of good properties on the coast to purchase. Just be smart about it. Remember, if nothing else, you're going to pay taxes on them. Don't become tax poor."

“All right, thanks, Ram.”

“Now, did you say you and Emily are getting married?”

“Yes, we’re getting married next January, if I can hold off that long,”

“What do you mean?”

‘Ram, she’s a young, beautiful woman.”

“Let me tell you this, Peter. We have become friends since Zoe broke your neck. Do you want me to have her do it again? I’m sure if I asked her, she could do it in such a way you would be getting married from your hospital bed. You do what it takes to love that woman through respect. The physical relationship will come in time.”

“I realized that, Ram. Are you forgetting our little ordeal in the warehouse on 162nd? I refuse to do anything stupid after that.”

Ramous laughed, “I almost wished I was standing where you were when that happened. All I saw was smoke. When you two get married, I want to pay for your honeymoon. Just say where you want to go, and I’ll pay for

it. Zoe and I have a perfect little vineyard in Tuscany. It's the perfect place for a honeymoon."

"Tuscany? What have you been up to, Ram?"

"Oh, a little of this, a little of that. You will love it there."

Neither Peter nor Emily knew what the Gens situation was, much less Ramous and Zoe, and Ramous wanted to keep it that way. By the time the two came back downstairs, Mike and Silver were standing in the lobby.

Ramous turned to Peter, "I'll talk to you later. Oh, and you better put a cash offer in on the house as soon as possible. It won't be on the market for long and we'll end up in a bidding war. I want you to win that war."

Ramous greeted and motioned Mike and Silver to follow him, "Gentlemen, let's sit out on the back-patio."

Emily asked and took orders for lunch. Ramous had tomato soup and tuna sandwiches, with pickles mixed in. Once set in front of him, he asked, "Did I marry the right woman?"

Zoe reached for the back of his neck. He stopped her in time. Although the Gens could break the neck with

just a pinch, they could also knock a person out with a similar pinch to the back of the neck.

Ramous said, “Silver, the Gens need legal counsel. We hope you will accept a retainer and come to work for us. We need you because of our situation, and the group trusts you completely. Honestly, we would like to set you up in business on our behalf. A lot of things have happened since we talked last.”

Ramous explained to him about the money, the concealed accounts, the Israeli citizenship, and the new corporation. He had no problem trusting Silver with any information, who was a good defender and friend to the Gens.

“I’m still working with the USAG’s office on all the indictments and settlements regarding St. Paul. St. Paul is as strong as they have ever been. So far, the USAG has only prosecuted those tied to the Angel Project. St. Paul was involved with so many other research projects if the whole company were brought down, it could cause a worldwide depression. You have heard the term, ‘Too Big to Fail,’? That’s St. Paul. It has been a lot of effort working through the mess. On a good note, we have wiped the Gens from existence. We found thousands of documents related

to their activities and other pertinent files. We destroyed them all.”

“That’s good news, Silver, but we could use you now. Can you recommend another person you can trust? I guess they don’t have to know about the Gens, but we’re involved in some shady business with Israel. Unfortunately, we can’t trust anyone else, and we’re in desperate need of legal counsel.”

“Jerome is available?”

“Oh. Wow! Really. He’s perfect.”

“Poor Guy. St. Paul has done a number on him. They accused him of everything from starting the Angel Project to stealing wastepaper from the wastebasket. St. Paul had a judge in their pocket who put him in jail for six months. The judge could have sentenced him for a much longer period. The purpose was to destroy him. They didn’t take his license, but they made sure he couldn’t get a job at a car wash should he need to. That man is intelligent. He’s a fantastic lawyer, one of the best I have seen, and that’s why St. Paul hired him in the first place, and why he rose through the ranks so fast. They hired him because he was an expert in international law. He also controlled several global operations for the Corporation.”

Ramous asked, "Where is he now?"

"He's in the New York Correctional Facility, but will get out next week. I offered to let him stay with me. I also offered him a place on the team prosecuting St. Paul, but he wants to get away. He's worried St. Paul will put him right back in jail. I suggest he's your man. He has more experience and knowledge about international law than I do."

"Okay, with your recommendation, we will offer him the job. Could you approach him for us? Even if we contract with Jerome, we still need you to be on retainer here in the US. Would you consider that too?"

"Yes, I will consider it, and I'll talk with Jerome. I'll draw up a new contract, retainer, and send it to you. Perhaps when I'm done with St. Paul, I'll join you."

"Well, Silver, I'm sorry to bring you to Oregon for nothing. I hope you stick around for a while and hang out with us."

"It's my pleasure. I'm happy to see the both of you. You look happy, and that's important. Then there's Mike. We talk at least once a week. Perhaps you will keep him busy for a while, and I can get my work done." He laughed.

“Mr. Durant, you’re lucky I don’t call collect. Ramous, I no longer work for anyone. Do you have a place for an aging beach bum in your corporation?”

“Yes, Mike, I hadn’t planned to go back without you. Do you have your passport?”

“Yes, I had hoped for a while to join up with you guys, so I kept everything ready to go.”

Although Silver wanted to stick around for a few days, he needed to get back to Washington DC for a hearing the day after next. So, he left for Portland later in the afternoon.

Mike went home. He was living in an apartment a mile from the bed-and-breakfast. He took the next day to settle his business and planned to come back the day after tomorrow with whatever he was taking with him.

Both Ramous and Zoe were unhappy about the situation of both Mike and Jerome. Hopefully, they could convince them to come to work for the corporation.

The couple took a long-awaited walk on the beach. It was a beautiful evening with the sky orange and blue, and the waves whispering to the surf. They held hands the whole time.

As they were walking, Zoe heard the sound of distress. They found a clump of sea-grass with several sticks lazily piled in front. As she moved the sticks, a small mixed dog came out and tried to pull them back. She could tell the young female dog had just given birth. They walked around to the backside of the sea grass to find a litter of newborn pups lying in the sand.

Someone had abandoned the little mass of matted fur. She couldn't have been over four pounds and was so thin from starvation. There was no way the mother dog could keep those pups alive. Once the mother realized they wouldn't harm them, her tail went into high gear, wagging. Zoe cried as she petted the mother and checked the pups to find out if they were all alive.

“We need to do something, Ram. We need to do something now!” all the while crying. “I'll run back to the resort and get a box. I'll come back, and we can load them up and take them home.”

Ramous agreed with her. He positioned himself in the sand to comfort the young mother until Zoe got back. Once in the box, they took the whole litter of eight pups back to the Beach Comber, at which time they fed the mother small amounts of food as not to make her sick.

After about ten minutes, after eating, she nursed the pups. They moved them up to the lighthouse suite and repeated feeding her through the night.

Zoe said, “They are going back with us, Ram. We can’t leave them here. I’m sure we can sneak them through customs. We can hide them in an overhead compartment.”

The next night Maggie and her family came by for a private dinner on the back deck. She chewed out Ramous for dumping his job on her, but confessed she enjoyed it.

Hank took Ramous on another tour of the new cabins, “You know Hank, I had forgotten all about these until you and Maggie showed up. You did a wonderful job! Thank you.”

“It was fun and my pleasure. Seeing your expression regarding them is a bonus.”

Everyone talked into the evening, mostly about whether Ramous and Zoe might return to Oregon. The answer still eluded Ramous. He knew it was his choice, and Zoe will go along with whatever he decided, but he wasn’t ready to commit either way. He found it troubling, because he figured he’d have an epiphany telling him what to do, but he was no closer to a decision than he was back in Madrid.

Ramous said, “You will need to come to Europe and spend time with us. We’re still getting the corporation setup, and once that’s finished, both Zoe and I’ll have lots of free time to show you around.”

They agreed and said they’re looking forward to doing so. Hank, Maggie and the kids stayed late as they built a campfire on the beach, and roasted marshmallows.

When everyone left, Ramous and Zoe checked on the mother and her pups, then returned to the beach to pick up the conversation they had while standing next to the fifty-five-gallon barrel, on fire, next to the hanger in Madrid.

Zoe asked, “Well, Hon, what do you think? Do you want to move back here?”

“I can’t make that decision, Sweetheart. It’s nice being back here, but I’m already missing Madrid, even sleeping in the coaches. What I’m thinking about is the vineyard in Tuscany. I love it there and it’s always popping up in my mind. I could imagine us living there, making cheese or something, and the occasional tourist spending the night. Although it’s so peaceful here, and there it’s so exciting. I want both.”

“Me too,” She kissed him.

They didn't mention their living conditions the rest of the evening. They just relaxed next to the fire, holding one another until they almost fell asleep.

Mike came by the next morning. He gave his notice, packed his things, and said goodbye to his apartment. The three left for the Hillsboro airport that afternoon and flew out early the next morning. They arrived in Madrid the next day in the afternoon. When they arrived, there was a group of Gens meeting with Mark, Dee and Cary. Cary had come back to Madrid for a week to collect additional information from several Gens.

Once Zoe walked into the hanger with her box of puppies, everyone mobbed them. Everyone was saying they wanted one. She explained to them they were still newborn and not able to leave the mother. She took names and said she would contact everyone in twelve weeks if any still wanted one.

Zoe named the mother Honey.

Mark left the crowd and asked Zoe and Ramous to meet with him in the office.

After they sat, Mark said, "This last Holstein pickpocket fell through. Someone stole the money out from

under us. Julie says only a Gen with a high level of experience could have taken that money.”

Zoe asked, “How curious. Did they use the French Branch as the receiver?”

“No, they used another bank all together, unrelated to CIC. They used a bank in Egypt. It was the Commerce Bank of Cairo. We caught them during a brief twinkle of an eye as they wiped the trail clean, during which we collected a phone number in Cairo. Someone left a phone number in the transfer. It would be untraceable once the trail evaporated. We have been too afraid to call it. It could be a trap. We’re not sure if it was a coincidence, or they saw us coming. We’re assuming it was a coincidence, but the number could only have been a message according to Julie. What do you think?”

Zoe said, “We should use a burner and call the number. We can always say we dialed the wrong number and hang up. What can it hurt, and why haven’t you done so already?”

Mark said, “We wanted time to consider it, and we have been so busy setting the group up with their new identities, and, okay, we were afraid to call the number. We were afraid we were being baited. Do you want to call?”

“Sure, I’ll call now,” She said, got up and went into the other office to retrieve a burner.

Zoe called the number. It rang six times before a man answered, “Hello, hello?”

“May I ask who this is, please?”

“Say nothing else, Zoe. This is a secure line. I’m excited you got my message.”

Zoe’s face turned white as she listened.

“This is Truman, and I’m not alone. We need your help. There are eleven of us. If you can, please call me back in eight hours. I should be able to talk then. Please, Zoe, call back. Have a good day, Sir.”

Zoe bent over the trash can and threw up.

Ramous asked, “Is everything all right, Hon? Who was that?”

She looked at them and said, “It was Truman.”

Mark responded, “Truman? Truman’s dead. This is a trick!”

“No, it was Truman. It was him, his voice, and I’m positive it was. He said they need our help, and that there

are eleven of them. I'm to call him back in eight hours and then he can talk,"

Truman was the number one Second Gen. He was the most advanced thinker of all the Gens. They presumed he and his team died in the Seattle explosion. Mark asked the other Gens and specialists to join them in the office, and got Julie on the speakerphone.

Once he told them about the phone call, and who it was who left the number during the failed transfer, everyone gasped.

Julie said, "You know, he's the only person who could pull it off. That's why I concluded it must have been a Gen, and one with advanced skills."

Mark answered, "Well, what does everyone think we should do? Should we trust it was Truman, and he needs our help? Truman has never asked for help in the past. It's always the other way around. Who could put him in such a situation?"

Zoe said, "It was him. We should hear him out. He can't trace the call, so what can it hurt?"

The group agreed Zoe should call the number back and listen to what the person on the other end had to say.

Truman could be such an asset to the Gens.

Everyone returned to processing the Gens, going over where they wanted to live, what kind of work or business they planned to start. It was funny how Cary had to remind so many Gens about themselves. They were used to operating under aliases, but never under their own names.

That evening Zoe called the number back and put it on speaker. The rest of the group listened in.

Truman answered, "Hello."

"Hello, Truman."

"It's nice to hear your voice, Zoe. I bet you thought I was dead. My team was not at the Seattle complex when it exploded. We were on special assignment in Columbia, with exception of Martin, who was in the building. We do miss him. Well, when the rest of us got back from Columbia, St. Paul was under scrutiny and they already moved the rest of you to Guantanamo. Congressman Canon fled the US taking Penny with him. I could mention chloroform at this point. He forced the rest of us to meet him in Paris, and from there they have moved us to Cairo, where we are now. Look up the Greenhouse business section there. I heard Canon say fifty-one over the phone,

but we don't know where Penny is or her condition. He's holding her life over us, making us do his bidding.

“We can't get by ourselves long enough to create an operation to find her. Please find her for us. Once you have found her, we will deal with Canon and his cohorts. Will you please help us?”

Once the group heard Truman's plea, they all agreed it was Truman, and they needed to help him.

Zoe answered, “Yes Truman, we will help you. Just leave it to us, we'll deal with this and contact you once we have her.”

Then Mark asked, “What about the bank transfer you interrupted, did you do that on behalf of Canon?”

“No, I needed to get a message to you. I saw the assets of this guy, Holstein, disappearing. I have been reading a lot of conspiracy and obscure newspapers and recognized the signature of a Gen's work. Iran is pretty upset. I figured you would go after the rest of his stuff, so I put a worm on that account. Once anyone accessed it outside the account manager, the worm was activated, taking the money and leaving the phone number. If I didn't take the money, I'm afraid you wouldn't call. You can have it. I only put a temporary hold on the transfer and inserted

my number as the contact, just attempt to access the account again. Only use the password 'freedom' when asked. Once you do that, all the pertinent information will present itself, and you can retrieve the money, but you better hurry.”

Then, he said, “It’s so good to hear your voice, Mark. I heard you were dead, and I was sad, you sneaky human.”

Tears filled Mark’s eyes, “It’s good to hear you too. We’ll get right on it and find Penny, goodbye.”

Where would they find her? Mark figured they probably kept her in France. Canon would worry if she was too close, and Truman’s team found her, he’d be a dead man. So, they planned to start their search in Paris.

Mark asked Zoe and Cat to conduct the search, but before they did, Cat called Mel to tell her what happened. Mel wanted to get involved.

It was late, and everyone went to bed, although no one could sleep, except for Ramous, who was out before his head hit the pillow. The next morning, he and Zoe had a conversation.

“I’m sorry to leave you behind, Hon. I don’t have a choice; we need to help Truman’s team.” Then, she said in a sweet, ‘would you do this for me,’ voice, “Do you mind taking care of the pups?”

Ramous laughed and agreed, as if he would abandon them otherwise.

Both Aaron and Mel flew in. Aaron got them setup in the Israeli embassy. That helped a great deal because when they found Penny, they could take her there if they needed to, and she would be safe.

The four of them were given rooms at the embassy. Once settled, they immediately went to work looking for Penny.

Zoe said, “Canon has an office or compound here in Paris, in the Greenhouse Business District. Truman said the number fifty-one.”

They asked one of the ambassador’s French assistants if he knew of the Greenhouse District. He said yes and gave them directions. After walking around for an hour and a half, they saw two expensive BMWs sitting outside a large self-storage area. The number on the door was fifty-one.

Aaron said, “This is it.”

They peeked through the door where a security guard was sitting at a desk. Canon turned the storage unit into an office complex.

Aaron entered and asked the security guard if the unit belonged to Congressman Canon. The officer went for his weapon, but Aaron put him out quietly.

As they got further into the unit, they saw in the back a woman sitting in a cage, on a bench, with her head tucked in her knees.

When she lifted her head, Mel said, “That’s her.”

There were two guards just outside the pen they kept her in. Zoe and Cat talked as they approached the two guards.

Zoe said, “Are you sure this is the right storage unit? It doesn’t look like one.”

Cat answered, “I’m positive. Marcus told me it was unit fifty-two.”

One guard stood up and confronted them, telling them the unit fifty-two was the one next door. They argued with him until the other officer joined in. At that moment, both Cat and Zoe knocked the guards out.

Mel, looking through the cage, said, “Hi, Sweetie.”

Penny lifted her head again, got up and ran to the door and said, “I thought you’d never get here. What took you so long?”

Mel answered, “Well, Sweetheart, we had to eat breakfast, you know it’s the most important meal of the day. We can’t show up looking pale and hungry. Are you okay?”

“Yes, they only beat me on Tuesdays. So, I’m good for another couple of days. Oh, be sure you turn off the switch on the wall behind you. I don’t want anyone to get electrocuted.”

They opened the door, and everyone hugged each other. Penny even hugged Aaron. They stripped the guards of their weapons and communication devices.

Zoe said, “We need to call Truman before we leave. If they call before we do, who knows what might happen on the other end?”

Zoe pulled a burner from her pocket and dialed Truman.

He answered, “Hello.”

Zoe handed the phone to Penny, “Hello, Truman. I missed you.”

“Are you okay, did Zoe find you?”

“Yes, they found me minutes ago. We wanted to contact you before these goons, they had standing over me, could contact anyone else.”

Zoe took the phone and told Truman he was free to deal with Canon as he saw fit, “Truman, before you do anything crazy, just give him a chance to repent, okay?”

“All right, Zoe, I will,” he said as he hung up.

They took Penny straight to the plane and left for Madrid.

In the meantime, Julie retrieved the money from the account Truman setup, and was on the phone with Levitt asking what he wanted done with his share. He told her to put in with theirs, and he would give her an account to transfer it to at a later time. He needed to determine who will get the money. He refused to be selfish and wanted to place money in other governmental accounts.

Mark asked all the Gens to meet in the hanger. He wanted them all there when Penny arrived. He wanted them there when the rest of team one arrived too.

When they got back to Madrid, Zoe called Truman again. His team was already making their way to the airport to get out of town.

“Do you have money, Truman?”

“Yes, we have a good amount of cash, and we’re in a van driving towards the border.”

“Okay, don’t do anything else until I call you back.”

Next she called General Levitt and asked if he could have the military meet them at the Egyptian border. He said he would send them right away.

She called Truman back and told him to drive to the Israeli border at Rafah. The Israeli military will meet them there and lead them to the airbase in Rehovot.

The next morning, another C130J arrived at the hanger. Everybody walked out to meet it. No one knew it was coming, and the General didn’t forewarn them. The same young officer exited the craft and said, “We have another shipment for you, do you want us to drop it here?”

Mark asked, “Can we see what’s in it first. We may need to unload it at another hanger.”

The officer lowered the tailgate, at which time Truman and his crew came walking out. Penny ran up and jumped into his arms and kissed him.

Mark looked at Zoe, “Now, I understand why and how Truman could be put in that position.”

There were hugs all around. It was like a homecoming. No one could say enough or say it fast enough. Ramous doubted anyone understood one another.

Mark asked the young officer to taxi the plane over to the other hanger.

Truman and another man from his team went back on board to collect two suitcases.

Then he asked, “Mark, where can I put these?”

“You can put them in the office. They will be fine there. What are they?”

“It’s information about St. Paul that Canon kept in his office safe. You will find it both interesting and disturbing at the same time. We can go over them later.”

“Okay, there’s a closet in the back-right corner. Put them there.”

Mark, Dee, Ramous and Zoe, took one of the coaches to the other hanger. He asked Truman and Penny to join them so they could debrief them.

The rest of his team stayed behind to visit with their fellow Gens.

Truman?

Mark asked both to explain how they ended up in such a situation, but Dee interrupted, “How long have you guys been a couple?”

Penny answered, “We’ve been together three years. We tried to keep it quiet, but Canon found out. That’s why he took me.”

Mark said, “Yeah, I was wondering what Canon did to get Truman to cooperate. I never thought Canon was that smart, I was quite surprised.”

“You’re right about that. He’s not too bright, but he had an ace up his sleeve. When we got back from South America, he pulled us into a room and showed us a live feed. Penny was tied up and two goons were beating her. I had no choice.”

“What about the rest of your team?”

“I told them, this was on me, and they should take off and go into hiding. They refused. They weren’t leaving no matter what.”

Zoe said, “I can understand that. One thing we Gens have built in is loyalty to those in our teams, and then the rest of our fellow Gens.”

“I argued with them, but they refused to leave. We and Canon flew out before the feds could arrest him. We were in Paris for a month and then we were moved to Cairo. He has some rather despicable friends in Cairo.”

Mark said, “I’m sorry we didn’t know sooner. We assumed all of you were dead, and we weren’t looking for you. That was a clever act you pulled off with that transfer. How did you do it?”

“I wasn’t a hundred percent sure, but it looked like a Gen operation.”

“What kind of access did you have that you could draw out a conclusion like that?”

“Am I on trial here, Mark?”

“No. I’m sorry. I’m just worried that someone else might have that same kind of access. I suspect we will be involved with similar kinds of operations in the future.”

Penny turned her attention to Mark. "Are you kidding? I'm sure everyone on this bus will agree that there's no other Gen like Truman. I can't tell you how many times he has pulled information out of thin air, information that saved our team from certain death. He's almost a mind reader."

Truman answered, "Well, Hon, no one is that good, but I always keep my eyes open. I first heard about Holstein in an underground newspaper, one of several papers my team and I previously set up throughout the world, particularly the Middle East. They were, conspiracy type, and used to exposing corruption. Never underestimate the tabloids. Canon always kept several of them lying around. One, in particular, put out by a fourteen-year-old girl and her thirteen-year-old brother, called the Lebanon Underground Truth, contained an article about Israel coming into Lebanon and killing everyone in a compound shared by Hezbollah and a German Muslim named Holstein. The article said he was a billionaire who was supporting Hezbollah, and other Jihadist factions. It said someone robbed a safe in the compound, but nobody knew who did it or what was in it. Hezbollah was blaming Iran, and Iran was Blaming Hezbollah. I thought they were going to turn on one another. I found it interesting and looked in

other newspapers to see if I could find anything else. There was nothing.”

Mark said, “That kind of stuff happens all the time. How did it lead you to the Gens?”

“Mark, give me a minute to explain. First, I’d like to mention that I’m impressed with those kids and the Lebanon Underground. I can’t believe how brave they are, two of the most heroic human beings I know. I’m surprised they aren’t Gens. They were always spot on. Then, I read the US and Germany, in another obscure underground newspaper, was releasing eight billion dollars belonging to Holstein. It was funny they never mentioned it again, and Holstein was nowhere to be found. It had to be an operation. I suspected it was a trap to catch Holstein or his money. Follow the money, right? I knew Holstein was in bed with the Iranians and kept a good share of his money in their Central Bank. One night, when Canon was sleeping, I hacked the Iranian Central Bank and saw someone was picking their pocket for eleven billion dollars. If nothing else, it was a coincidence. To me, it looked like a Gen operation, and I figured, what did it matter? If it wasn’t, I wouldn’t get a phone call. So, I intercepted the transfer and hid it, but I only hid it. Everything else worked as you intended, only I picked your pocket. I’m sorry, I really

didn't have any other options. I didn't know how much longer they'd keep Penny alive. At some point all of my team would have become a liability."

"We're not mad about that. You did the right thing, and fortunately Zoe took a chance and called. The rest of us were concerned it might be a trap. We're grateful you're alive and with us, and that money will go a long way to get all the remaining gens on their way to new lives. That includes your team."

"Thanks. So, the money was where Julie put it, but hidden from view. I never asked if she retrieved it? That was a lot of money."

"Yes, she did."

"Good. Anyway, I inserted my cell number in place of the money, so only the person who took the money could find it. It was funny to listen to Iranian government condemn Israel afterwards. I must say, Julie was sloppy. I used to have a hard time figuring out what she was doing," he said, laughing. "I will admit, though, I couldn't follow where the money was going, and I only hid it. I couldn't steal it. Imagine how mad she'd be if I stole it."

Mark said, "She wasn't working under optimum conditions."

“When are the conditions ever optimum, Mark? She needs to be more careful. There are elements out there more capable than we Gens give credit for.”

Then mark said, “I’ll give her credit, only she could have figured that out. Well, maybe, Zoe.”

“Yes. Both are very capable. Mark, let’s get back to the network of underground newspapers. I believe the CIA used the network to send Canon information. It was being sent from the States. I found in Canon’s files a list of all the operatives throughout the whole Middle East. He had a few names marked in red. It looked like a path from one country to another. Being who Canon was in the St. Paul Corporation, and his position in Congress, it only seemed natural he had that kind of information. He had the names of every foreign operative and details of a couple dozen underground networks.

“I don’t know how that’s important to us at this juncture. We’re only concentrating on getting the Gens situated with new lives.”

“Listen. Before Canon kidnapped us, I set up seven international phone numbers that operatives could call. It was a one-way number, and we kept them secret. Anyone with a given number could call in and leave detailed

messages, resistance type messages. I gave the underground newspapers a code they could use to access one another's messages. From there, they put it on the net or sent it outside their country to have it published. Besides those kids in Lebanon, we had dozens of high-level government officials who provided information on the system. I don't know how, but Canon had all the numbers and contact names. He was getting ready to sell the information to the highest bidder. He wasn't only looking for cash, he was looking for a country to give him asylum. Once he does that, those nations will sell names to the others and many brave souls will be murdered. I'm sure of it."

"Okay, what can we do?"

"Nothing, until I call and warn everyone. My last call was just before Canon took Penny. I used to call in on a regular basis to inform everyone the system was still secure. Since, I only called once while in Egypt, I suspect a lot of the underground papers have stopped printing for fear the system has been compromised. For that, I'm even more impressed with those children. They haven't missed a beat in publication."

"You can call them now if you like."

“It will take me hours on the phone catching up. I’ll wait until tonight when I’m alone.”

“On the next note, when we get back to the other hanger, you and Penny will need to get with Cary and have her create new identifications for the two of you. We are all becoming Israeli citizens. They have offered to help us disappear. Cary will explain it to you.”

Just as Mark finished saying that, they pulled up to the second hanger. The C130J was waiting for them with the tailgate down facing the hanger. This load contained another AugustaWestland AW101 VVIP helicopter on the end.

Mark asked the officer, “How many more helicopters are you going to bring us?”

“This is the last one as far as I know. This load will bring us up to two-thirds of the assets the General promised you.”

“How is it you’re always the one delivering these loads to us? Did you make the General mad?”

“No, sir, I’m happy to be doing this for you guys. I’m one of you,” he said and stuck his arm out.

Mark felt above his elbow and found the identifying dent. Mark smiled and said, "Thank you."

The current load contained the helicopter, three semis, six motorboats and trailers, and nineteen more vehicles. When they got to the back of the plane, there was a steal pallet covered with a black tarp. Ramous removed the tarp. The pallet contained no less than a thousand pounds of gold ingots. When Mark saw it, he motioned for the young officer to come over. Once he was standing next to him, Mark told him to take the gold back to the General and keep it.

"We don't want nor have the time right now to deal with this."

Truman looked at him like he was crazy, but the gold presented more problems than it would solve.

Mark told the officer, "If the General doesn't want it or is in a good mood, perhaps he might store it for us until we can deal with it."

The C130J left within the hour, but only after the crew and the group shared a cup of coffee.

When they got back to the first hanger, now called hanger one, Art met them as they pulled up.

“Dee, the paperwork for the two homes you purchased is ready for your signature. They have set a time for 10 AM tomorrow morning. You’re to call them if the time doesn’t work.”

The houses Dee found both slept sixteen or more people, which is what the group expected.

For the rest of the day, when they weren’t meeting with Cary, Truman’s team slept. When they did meet, Cary explained to them the Israeli involvement and the monies that were available to them.

Ramous, Zoe and Cat took a pickup to the supermarket to purchase items for a large dinner. They also purchased four BBQs on which to cook. That evening they prepared a big dinner for everyone.

At dinner, Mel sat down and asked Truman, “What did you do with Canon?”

Before she let him say anything, Mel motioned the rest of the group to come over and listen.

“When I received the call from Penny and Zoe, I intended to kill him. He overheard me and ran out the back door. We looked for him, but he hid and we were eager to get out of there. Often when he answered his phone, I could

see the number and knew who was calling. Frequently, local Jihadist groups called him and threaten him. They understood they could never get past us, so it was limited to threats. When we couldn't find him, I found a phone and made calls to two different groups. When we got to the front of the residence, Mr. Canon came screaming out of his driveway in his luxury Mercedes and went speeding down the road. As Canon was speeding away, a pickup full of, I guess terrorists, pulled up and stopped in front of us. They looked at us and then looked at the Mercedes speeding away. They went after him. So, the last time we saw Congressman Canon, he was speeding away with a truckload of Jihadists after him.”

Mel said, “What goes around comes around, I guess.”

“Yep. Canon kept a van for when he was carrying a bunch of his friends around, and we took it to the border where the Israeli military met us. We didn't have a problem getting through customs because of them. Now, it's good to be among friends, among family!”

The next morning, Dee told Ramous someone left a message for him with a code 1235. Ramous listened to the

call and left a number attached to their code. Within five minutes he received a call at the number he left.

It was Jerome, “Hi Ramous, how are you, man?”

“I’m good. I understand St. Paul has done a number on you. We want to help. I will ask one question so we don’t discuss this over the phone. Are you interested in going to work for us?”

“Yes, I am, I’d love to.”

“Okay, where are you?”

“I’m at JFK in New York, heading back to Florida. I just got out of the New York Corrections Facility. They tried me in New York, so they locked me up here. They let me out four days earlier than I was scheduled to get out, at which time Silver informed me you wanted to hire me for legal services. I was excited about the offer.”

“Do you have your passport?”

“Yes, I had it when they incarcerated me. It’s still valid. I used it for identification for my ticket to Florida.”

“Good, I want you to fly to Rome. We will get you a ticket for the next flight out of New York. Can you do that?”

“I’d love to fly to Rome right now. Tell me when and what airlines.”

“Call this same number back in fifteen minutes, and we’ll have it all set up for you,”

Once he hung up, he asked Zoe to call the Rome Fiumicino Airport and book a flight from JFK to Rome for Jerome Waters. Ramous asked him to fly to Rome in case the CIA was tracking him. If they do, the trail will end there. Fifteen minutes later, Jerome called back.

Ramous answered, “Jerome, there’s a flight leaving JFK for Rome in forty-five minutes, Northwest Airlines. Can you be on it?”

“I can do that. I’m traveling light, so I’ll need clothes when I get there. Is that a problem?”

“No problem, we’ll pick you up in Rome. Again, the ticket has been purchased in your name at Northwest Airlines. You better hurry.”

“Thanks, Ramous, I’ll meet you in Rome,” he said and hung up.

Ramous asked Zoe, “We can take a bell, right?”

“I was planning on it, Hon.”

Ramous and Zoe left for Rome within the hour. They were hoping to spend time alone, together. They shopped throughout the day, for both themselves and Jerome.

Zoe asked, “Why didn’t you ask him his size? That would have made shopping for him easier.”

“I’m sorry, Hon. I didn’t even think of it. Why didn’t you mention it when I was on the phone? You were listening to the whole conversation.”

“Oh, shut up. I’m sure I can get within his range, so we’ll just buy a few different sizes and he can have the ones that fit. I’m sure others would wear what’s left over.”

“Of course.”

After shopping most of the day, they had a romantic dinner and attended the theater. Since Jerome was expected to get in early the next morning, they retired right after the show.

They met him at the gate, shook his hand, and ushered him to the helicopter.

Jerome asked, “Nice helicopter. Is it yours?”

Ramous answered, “It belongs to the corporation.”

“Corporation, you’re not referring to St. Paul, are you?”

“No, are you kidding? We’ll go over that once we’re back in Madrid. How was your flight?”

“It was comfortable. Being a free man made it even better. I slept most of the way. How have you guys been? We haven’t talked for what seems like years. Time passed so slow in prison. I can’t imagine being in there for a lifetime. I can’t even believe I said that.”

Ramous answered, “We have been busy, but everyone is well. It will blow your mind once we get back to Madrid. So, don’t ask us questions until we get there, okay?”

Jerome was surprised when they landed and walked through the hanger.

“Where did you get all of this?”

Zoe answered, “Oh, we did a little of this and a little of that.”

When Mark approached him, he rubbed his eyes, “Is that you, Mark? I thought you were dead.”

“Hi Jerome, It’s me in the flesh.”

Mark motioned him to follow him to the office, where they spent the next hour explaining what they have been doing. They trusted him, and needed legal counsel, so they told him everything.

Afterward, Mark asked him to give a brief talk about his role with St. Paul and to outline his responsibilities.

“I entered Harvard Law at sixteen, and graduated with two PHDs, one in Business Law and the other in International Law. That’s where I met my friend Handle, who recruited me for St. Paul two years after I graduated. We were at Harvard together. He became one of the lead legal counselors for St. Paul. He recruited me from another law firm to be his assistant. My friend died two years later from cancer. Before he died, he made sure I was to be his replacement, and St. Paul accepted his recommendation. I ended up with forty-three lawyers under me and at least a third of St. Paul’s financial staff. There were seven of us in similar positions at St. Paul. I was sent all over the world to resolve legal issues. During which, I got a keen knowledge of how St. Paul’s foreign operations worked. Five years after they offered me the position, James Curdy retired. He was VP of World Operations. They offered me the position, and I took it. From then on, I was responsible for

international operations from legal matters to getting the floor swept.”

Ramous asked, “How did you get involved with the Gens?”

“Mike approached me. At first, I thought Mike was sneaky. That’s what I called him, ‘The Sneaky Man.’ I was amazed at all the information he gathered on St. Paul without St. Paul finding out. He was always telling me stuff I didn’t know. Mike often gave me information, and I’d research it and find out it was true. He reached out to me at first with encrypted emails. It took a while to figure them out, but I did. They were referring to a project called the Angel Project and referred to a group of lab rats he called the Gens. He directed me to a website, a conspiracy website that explained what they were and where they came from. No one on the site paid attention to it as it was on the left side of bizarre. Many of the visitors to his site called him an idiot and told him to get off the boards.”

Everyone laughed, except for Mike.

“Later, Mike told me, because I didn’t turn him in, he went a step further. He sent a Gen to visit me. It was a First Gen by the name of Wyatt A107. At first, they labeled the First Gens with an ‘A’ preceding their number. Wyatt

told me everything, even cutting himself to show me his skeleton. That freaked me out. I had no choice but to believe him and decided that I couldn't let St. Paul continue with the Angel Project. I contacted Mike on the back channels and we've been working together since. Wyatt turned on us and almost exposed us. I don't know why he didn't, but he died in Seattle with the others."

He looked at Mark and said, "I knew Mark before he was dead. Welcome back from the dead, Mark. It's good to see you're all in good hands. Mark has always been a valuable asset. He convinced St. Paul to give me a security detail when I traveled. Often, I entered countries hostile to the US. I'm not sure how Mark did it, but St. Paul gave me three Gens as my security detail. I wasn't supposed to know they were Gens, so we never talked about the Angel Project in public, but they gave me tons of information when we were alone. This is probably bad timing, but I'm starving. I haven't eaten since yesterday."

Mark said, "First, Jerome, we thought you might be interested to know your security detail is here at the hanger."

"No way, really? That's fantastic. Where are they?"

Mark directed him out of the office where those three Gens were waiting for him. They stood in front of him as he walked out. He reached for Todd and Zack's hand, and then hugged Beta, "It's good to see you guys. I'm so happy you're still alive."

Todd and Zack were still processing, so the four of them sat talking until they finished.

Meanwhile, Mark called Julie and asked her to come to the hanger the next day, at which time they would establish a position for him.

After Julie arrived, they met in the hanger office. As the group took their seats, Mark stood up and said, "Jerome will take the position of CEO for the Israel Finance Group. He's experienced and was in a similar position when he was with St. Paul. His first duty will be to find an actual office complex in Tel Aviv. Julie has been acting CEO, but we plan to keep her and her four assistants in Rome, so she can manage our money. Dee, Ramous, Zoe, Cat, Mel, and I, will make up six Board Member positions. I'll be Board Chair until we can have elections. We'll select seven more from among the Gens. Jerome will need to pick three CFOs and someone to handle human resources. Human Resources will select the business staff and maintenance, etc. Truman

and his team will take over security if we can talk them into that. Truman has already offered his services, but the rest will have to make that decision. We don't want to encumber anyone. Everyone is free to do as they please. It's time for the Gens to live normal lives; if that's possible."

Cat noticed Truman was not at the meeting, "Where is Truman? How come he's not here?"

Mark answered, "He and his team had things they needed to take care of. They left last night and should be back tomorrow."

Afterward, he called Julie to the front to explain shares and dividends.

"We are still working on a number of different issues, but thus far, the General has put Israel Finance Group on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange. We're listed as a private corporation, so no one will pay attention to us. I adjusted the date, so I listed us with a start date back on June 1, 2007, and we opened with one million total shares. Each share is worth fifty-one hundred dollars USD.

"That will make every Gen a millionaire. The average investment income for each should be around two million USD per year. The corporation will pay Jerome

Waters five million annual salary, with additional benefits and bonuses. We will work out his compensation to equal seven million a year. My assistants are being paid a handsome salary where they are now. Should they leave, they will receive the same annual return as the rest of the Gens. As long as the hackers are working for the corporation, we will pay each of them one million in annual salary plus the two million in an annual payout of dividends, just like the rest of the Gens.”

Mark asked, “What about the principal owners. What compensation will they receive?”

“Legally, they will be called The Group, and the group will receive dividends based on their investment. Note, there’s nine billion one hundred forty-three million USD that belongs to Zoe, Ramous, Mark, Dee, Mel, and Cat as the principal owners, or The Group. The interest for the first year, from those monies, will go back into the Corporation and should equal six hundred forty million USD. The second year, they will invest, on behalf of the Gens, two billion USD, and on behalf of themselves four billion USD, with the remaining monies invested outside of the Israel Finance Group and controlled by me on their behalf.”

Dee said, “Yeah, we’re billionaires. Now, Mark and I can buy that property in St. Martin.”

Julie continued, “One last note, we’re paying One million annually to the President of Sella Bank, Nicola Bernardi, for consulting services, and those services give me free rein to do as I please, while he looks the other way. That’s our best investment. Also, he’s a good friend of mine and I trust him.”

Mark stood up, “Thank God for bankers. Now, I have agreed to pay Truman three million in annual salary, plus his dividends. I did not mention it to Julie. Now for the assets, we have a group of Gens working on making all the deed and title transfers on behalf of the corporation. The corporation will own every physical asset. We’ll try to make them available to anyone who needs or wants to use them. We’ll hire another person to manage those assets, preferably a Gen.”

Julie asked, “You didn’t include my Rolls in that group, did you?”

“No, Julie. The Rolls belongs to you. Now, among Jerome’s responsibilities will be to put together a legal team. He’s an expert in international law, and an expert in international business. I have asked him, first, to find us a

lawyer who's an expert in property management. Both hangers are full. Also, I think we need to purchase at least four more hangers around the world, including one in Israel and one in the US. The others will determine where everyone lives once processed. We'll try to buy them in the most Gen populated countries.”

The Gens will have real lives out from under the thumb of the St. Paul Corporation, and the US government.

Truman and his team landed the Airbus at Kiryat Shamona Airport. When they landed, they were supposed to be met by the IDF. Instead, there were several police with guns drawn. The team was reluctant to exit the plane.

After five minutes of confusion, two IDF vehicles pulled up, and the police were on their way.

Once Truman was off the plane, he asked one soldier, “What was that all about?”

The officer replied, “I'm sorry we had to stop and deal with a madman on the highway. He was throwing rocks at cars passing by, including us. We didn't want you to leave on your own, so we had the police hold you here.”

“Terrorist?”

“No, just a mad Orthodox Jew.”

“Sir, we need to get to the border within the next hour. Did you bring the supplies I asked for?”

“Yes, is that all you need, six canisters of tear gas?”

“Yep, the tear gas should do the trick.”

They delivered Truman’s team to a spot next to the border fence a mile away from the border crossing into Lebanon. Since Israel maintained the fence, it was no problem cutting through. Once through, Truman told them they would be back in four hours and asked if the soldiers could wait for them. They were going to Jazzin to collect two teenagers. As they crossed the fence, a Lebanese woman, driving a van, stopped and picked them up.

When the team got to Jazzin, a crowd was already gathered around a small square. The government was planning on beheading the youngsters in their hometown to scare other teenagers from following in their footsteps. Many in the square were calling out for the death of the two.

They set up blocks in the middle of the square and brought the children out. They forced them to kneel and place their heads on the blocks. There was only one man standing waiting to execute them both. He planned to kill the girl first and then the boy.

Once he was standing in place, the mayor and a military officer came and stood next to him, intending to give the signal to commit the executions. Just as it appeared the officer was giving the signal to kill the girl, Truman's team tossed the six tear gas canisters into the crowd and next to the executioner.

Everyone ran in all directions. The officer and the mayor ran for cover. Four women ran at the executioner. He turned and lifted his sword as if to defend himself when the women threw their hands up, as if they were only trying to get out of the way.

He turned to find the prisoners gone.

Truman and his crew spent the rest of the day in an Israeli hospital because a military officer beat the kids and interrogated them for the previous three days. They, with the children, left the next morning for Madrid.

Back in Madrid, Ramous, Zoe and Jerome were inspecting the second hanger and the assets within.

Ramous asked, "Where are you from, Jerome? I suspected a slight accent."

"I was born in Kenya. My family immigrated to the US when I was eight years old. My father is Kenyan and

my mother is Sudanese. They met while attending Oxford. He's an engineer, and she's an Archeologist. My father retired soon after we moved to the States. I homeschooled while following my mother around to all her digs until I entered Harvard at age sixteen. So, I'm acquainted with the world. I've already told you the rest of the story after Harvard."

Zoe asked him, "Why didn't you ever marry? Do you have a girlfriend?"

"Right now, I'm single. I was engaged once, but my work ended that. Since then, I haven't met the right person. I mean anyone who could put up with my position. I was always busy at the office. There hasn't been time to get involved in a relationship. I don't even have time to visit my parents. Regarding my parents, I was wondering if it was possible for them to join me in Israel? I assume that's where I'll be living?"

Ramous answered, "Yes, you will live in Israel, and I don't believe there's a problem with your parents joining you there."

"Wonderful, I'm looking forward to getting to work."

They returned to the first hanger just as Truman and his team arrived. They had two young teenagers with them, both speaking Lebanese. Truman called the group into the office so he could explain the two youngsters.

He said, “Mark, the other day, I told you about a brother and sister who were printing an underground paper. Well, meet Abila and Kashir Sabra, editors of the Lebanon Underground Truth. My team and I went into Lebanon and extracted them yesterday. The government was going to execute the two for sedition, and their involvement in the underground paper. The Lebanese government murdered both parents when they raided their home, so they will live with Penny and me for the time being. When they’re better, we will set them up online as editors of that same paper, but not until they’re able to do so.”

Everyone in the room stood up and hugged them, each one telling them if they needed anything to please say so. Except for Ramous, who didn’t understand what anyone was saying. He did hug them both.

A Corporation Comes to Life

Mark asked if everyone could meet in two days to discuss the Corporation. He rented a hall in Tel Aviv, and that would give everyone in Italy and Spain time to make their way there. It was time to build the company, move it from an idea to a physical entity. Also, he wanted to introduce Jerome to those who hadn't met him yet.

Those currently at the hanger, with Julie and her team, arrived the next morning. Everyone else, most of who were in Tuscany, including Mike, made their way to the hanger where they boarded the 727. They arrived the next day in Tel Aviv.

Dee, Cat, and Zoe arrived at the conference room early to set up a brunch table with pastries, fruit, water, coffee, and various fruit juices.

Once everyone was seated, Mark stood up and said, “Hello everyone. Recently, several of us have participated in some work for the Israeli military. While doing so, we learned about ten more Second Gens. These Gens are in high positions within the IDF. One is a high-ranking General, General Levitt. Because of him, we have been given Israeli citizenship. Not only has he provided us citizenship, he has provided us with a couple financial opportunities. I’d tell you, but you know that any time we do something of that nature, it’s on a need to know basis, but I will say those things have been very profitable, and through them, we have gained enough wealth to provide for all of us for the rest of our lives. I’m not talking about a small pension or retirement. I’m talking about genuine wealth. This money is currently residing in several secure accounts in an offshore bank. In the near future, we will invest this wealth into a corporation called the Israel Financial Group, based in Tel Aviv, again thanks to General Levitt. Julie and her assistants will send out statements soon regarding investments and shares, and will act as the financial advisor for the new company until otherwise determined.”

Paris Lindell, one of the Second Gens, asked, “Are we going to stay here in Tel Aviv after this meeting. If not,

how long are we going to stay in Tuscany? I'm ready to do something other than clean the vineyard.”

“I understand, Paris. It will only take a little while longer, probably one more month. Hold on, please. We need to establish the physical corporation first. Currently, the company only exists on paper. We all, as shareholders, will go into the business of investment banking. When I say we, I'm not saying any of you need to work for the company. You are and will be free to move on however you choose, but you're welcome to join the company should you want to do so. We could use you. For that reason, we don't want you moving around the world only to have to move again, should you come to work for the corporation.

“Paris asked, “What if we don't come to work for the company, but have other ideas?”

“I understand some prefer that, but the first dividends won't be deposited into your accounts until the end of the month, so, unless, you have the money to make such a move on your own, they money won't be there for you until then. We have to disperse those dividends in an organized manner.”

“I guess, I could last another month. What positions will be open in the corporation, and when will you be hiring?”

“We’ll need everything from financial managers, to janitors. We’ll put out a list of positions once we complete it. I think there will be some exciting positions available for anyone who wants to come to work for us.”

The room began talking among themselves. Mark presumed it was futile to interrupt, so he walked over to the table and poured himself a glass of water. He let them speak among themselves for the next ten minutes.

Maya Roads, the woman sitting next to Paris, asked a question, once the crowd became quiet. “What did you mean by dividends?”

Everyone in this room will receive dividends, based on each one’s shares in the corporation, although the first payment will include a lump sum of two million dollars. That will have to last you one year. After the first year, each of you will receive one-hundred-sixty-five thousand dollars monthly as dividends. So, before you leave today, get with Julie and her staff, and they will get you setup with banking here in Tel Aviv. You will have access to that account worldwide. At a later date, should you have

something else in mind, contact Julie at that time. Don't take up her time today to do that. There's something else you might consider. If you don't come to work for the corporation, and you choose to go into business for yourself, we will help you, but we hope you build that company under the umbrella of the Israel Finance Group. We can work those details individually at a later date. I wanted to tell you should any be thinking of doing so. You are all free to live whatever lives you choose. That will not affect your dividends. Anyone who works for the company will receive a wage and dividends. We will provide for everyone. I hope this meeting will calm your nerves. I know there have been questions of concern. I hope those questions are resolved.”

He paused again to allow for audience conversation.

“Now, the real purpose of this meeting is to inform you all what our next steps will be to bring this company to life. Everyone should understand how we intend to make a future for us all. Our first step in bringing this about was to find someone to run the company for us. We couldn't have found a better person than Mr. Jerome Waters.”

Mark gestured for Jerome to stand up.

“Please meet Jerome Waters. He will become the CEO of Israel Finance Group. He was one of the top Managers and Attorneys with St. Paul.”

Half of the crowd moaned.

“Exactly, boo, but don’t worry. He’s no longer affiliated with St. Paul. Everyone in this room has probably heard his name. If you don’t already know, trust me when I say, and I can’t express enough, Jerome was the most important person helping us get where we are today. We wouldn’t be in this situation if it were not for him. We wouldn’t be free of St. Paul or the US government.”

The whole room clapped for him.

Mark realized they were teasing Jerome. He spent the next hour explaining to the crowd what Jerome’s role was. When he finished, they spent two hours filling out the Board. Jerome will become the Board Chair, but they were lucky to get twelve members, because the main requirement to be a Board member was, they needed to live in Israel. It appeared only a few planned to live in Israel.

Mark called Jerome up front to answer questions. Other than Mark’s long-winded speech, the rest of the meeting went by quickly. Jerome spent a short, awkward period answering a few questions and receiving even fewer

suggestions. Other than selecting the rest of the Board, the Gens just weren't interested in running a company. They were more interested in getting on with their new lives, and the Group understood that.

Everyone returned to Madrid, Rome, and Tuscany. Dee and Cat left to inspect the new properties they purchased. They needed to be furnished, and it turned out, Dee didn't get along with Cat any better than she did with Zoe when they were looking to purchase them. It was decided that Dee could furnish them herself.

The group enjoyed a wonderful dinner their first evening back. Mike was being quiet, and Ramous asked him why.

“Ram, I've really enjoyed myself staying in Tuscany, especially making wine with Matthew. I loved the daily walks in the early evening. And, not to mention Rome is fantastic. But you know what?”

“What?”

“I miss the Oregon coast. That's all I think about lately. I'm going to move back and pick up my life, perhaps contact some of my old friends in Portland.”

“Have you decided when you’re leaving? You know, everyone is going to miss you.”

“I hope so. I’ll certainly miss them. I’d like to leave within the next couple days. I’ve kind of become anxious about it.”

“Okay, but before you go, I want to do something for you.”

“You don’t have to do anything. The only thing I would ask, is that you let me take up residence in the bed-n-breakfast until I find a place.”

“I’m going to do much better than that. Did you see that house Daniel, well I, bought, the one behind the Blue Gull Inn?”

“Oh yeah. That’s a beautiful place. You’re going to let me stay there?”

“No. I’m not going to let you stay there. I’m going to have Daniel sign the property over to you. Not only that. You have been more instrumental in the success of the Gens than anyone else, and everyone knows that. Zoe and I spoke with The Group, and they have agreed to pay you an equal share of dividends that the Gens will receive. You

will be a very rich man upon your return to the Oregon coast.”

“I’m a bit beside myself. I don’t know how to thank you guys.”

“Mike, you worked for as much as anyone else. No thanks are necessary. I don’t know why they didn’t include you in the first place. They should have.”

During the rest of dinner, they chided Jerome for going to work for St. Paul of his own accord. He nervously laughed it off, but they loved him for the sacrifices he made for them too.

Mike left two days later, after repeatedly thanking everyone.

Jerome’s first task was to purchase two buildings or building complexes in Israel. If there were none available, he needed to purchase property to build on. They also agreed the complexes should be in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. The larger office will be for general operations, and the smaller office, in Jerusalem, would be for the Gens themselves.

The next day, Mark, Dee, and Jerome flew to Israel so Jerome could meet Aaron and General Levitt.

Both the General and Aaron had already been casually looking for property for the Corporation to purchase.

Aaron said, “I found the perfect building for the Tel Aviv office. It’s ten stories with a park-like setting surrounding it. There’s a fountain out front just before the main doors. The bank repossessed it last year from a hedge fund company. The leadership took off with all the investments, and now the property is in the hands of a bank trustee and he’s eager to sell it.”

Jerome said, “Let’s go inspect it now. It sounds interesting, but things are often explained and then seen, and ending up being two different things.”

He stared at Aaron. Aaron stared back, confused by his comment. “What?”

Jerome broke out laughing. “Shall we go?”

The General had other plans, so he didn’t join them. The building was everything Aaron said it was. It was only five years old and beautifully modern. Jerome walked through every floor looking for bathrooms and counting the number of Jacks throughout. It came with a beautiful view of the feather blue Mediterranean.

Jerome said, “This complex is perfect. We don’t need ten floors, but I’m sure we will grow into it, or we can rent space.”

Mark and Dee agreed. Dee particularly liked it. That means Mark didn’t really have a choice. He liked it anyway.

Mark asked, “What’s the asking price?”

Aaron answered, “I’m not one hundred percent sure. Let me call Karl and get him over here.”

When Karl arrived, he found them on the tenth floor looking out at the Mediterranean.

“It’s a beautiful view, isn’t it?”

Jerome answered, “Yes, it is. We’ve looked the building over and have questions. First, what’s the asking price?”

“The original cost to build it was eighty million. The previous owners had paid the mortgage down to twenty million before they exited the country. I’ll cut right to the chase, because I can tell by the bored look on your faces that you ask questions to get answers. So, without the standard sales pitch, we want thirty million for the whole complex.”

Jerome said, “That’s stealing it. What were the utility and maintenance costs for the last three years the building was occupied?”

“Utilities have run just over forty-five thousand a month during that period. As far as maintenance goes, it’s up to whoever owns the building and is a controllable overhead.”

Mark asked, “Do you have a recent inspection report on the complex?”

“Yes, we had one done six months ago in preparation to sell it. Everything, I mean everything was better than code. I intended to brag about it.”

Jerome said, “Your intention noted. We are interested. I think you should draw up the paperwork, but we need to run it by our Board first. Do you have any other available properties in Jerusalem?”

“I’d need to go back to the office and find out what’s available. We have properties all over Israel, and dozens outside. I’ll show you what properties we have in Jerusalem next time we meet.”

Mark said, “I’m certain we will buy this one. We’ll work out the financial details once we have talked with our

Board, although they gave us the authority to make the decision without them. I'm including them to be polite and provide them with a sense of importance. We will get together with you tomorrow, and we can sign all the paperwork for the title and transfer of funds to your financial institution. See you tomorrow?"

"Yes, sounds good. How about 2 PM?"

"We will meet you at 2 PM tomorrow. Aaron will bring us over."

Karl thanked them for their business and left the building.

Dee said to Mark, "You made the decision awful fast. What if the Board doesn't agree? What if we don't agree?"

"Oh, don't worry, Sweetheart, if the Board doesn't want us to purchase this building, I'll purchase it myself and rent out the space."

Jerome spoke up, "Wait. I expect you to include me in on that purchase."

"You dawg! I'm confident the corporation will buy this complex. There's no reason they wouldn't. It's perfect for us."

Everyone agreed and expressed their excitement to give Israel Finance Corporation, Inc. a home.

Mark contacted the Board members that evening, and they all accepted his decision to purchase the property.

They met Karl at 2 PM, with all his lawyers, representing the real estate company and a title agency.

Jerome reviewed the paperwork and approved it for signing. Everyone looked at him until he realized he needed to sign the paperwork himself, with the others only witnessing his signature. Mark called Julie and had her transfer thirty million into the realtor's account.

Now, they needed to find another lessor complex in Jerusalem, maybe Hebron, one or the other. Karl pointed out that real estate was at a premium in Jerusalem and ten times more costly than Tel Aviv. Anyway, they couldn't agree on a property in either city, so they'd look into it another day.

Jerome was eager to hire needed management. Also, he wanted to rethink his security detail for the building.

“Mark, Truman is too valuable. He needs to be more than just a security officer. To hire Truman as a

security officer would represent a cut in pay, a demotion for him. He needs to be in a higher position. I loved the detail you first set me up with, and want those three to run security at the complex. I want to ask Truman to join me in management, helping run the corporation.”

“Boss, thanks for including me, but it’s your decision. That’s what we hired you for.”

“Fantastic! Now, I think I should hire you too.”

“For what?”

“I will hire you to follow me around and remind me why I’m in this position.”

“You’re too funny, but on a more serious note, I don’t intend to work for the corporation. Once it’s up and functional, I plan to take a long vacation with Dee. We’re planning to go stay in St. Martin for a while, and travel while collecting our benefits.”

“If you’re planning to change your position, make preparations now. Don’t wait until the last minute. People are counting on you, Mark.”

“I’m aware of that and don’t worry. I won’t leave without you taking my place. You are more than capable of picking up my role. That will be expected of you once

you're comfortable. Clearly, my role was temporary until a more permanent person, you, could take over."

Jerome thought about what Mark said for the rest of the day and eventually concluded Mark was right.

The next morning, Jerome called on his friends and security detail to follow him around. He wanted to spend time with them. He brought in two of the hackers and three other Gens, Marian, Fred, and Gene, to furnish the building and set up networking. It took just over a month to furnish three floors, with Israel Finance Group settling into floors six through nine.

Truman, after he and Jerome took a long walk, said he was not ready to work for anyone. Most of the Gens came to the same conclusion. Jerome figured it might take a couple years for the Gens to get bored and come to work for the corporation. He wasn't going to hold his breath, so he leased the empty offices on the lower floors to other tenants. Seven Gens came to work for him, and they spent most of their first month brainstorming about how to get the company off the ground. Jerome decided to use them as outside agents for the company, to act as auditors and go into businesses who asked for loans to determine whether

they would be a profitable investment by the company, or not.

Julie was busy in Rome and had already determined they would make no loans for less than seven percent interest. She could invest the Gens money within the banking system and gain that kind of return. Also, seven percent was an excellent introductory rate for the young corporation. Julie turned out to be more important than anyone realized as she, in her position with her bank, could send certain high-quality businesses to the corporation for short-term business loans, and often at one or two percentage points above their startup rate. Also, within the banking world there were requests made by banks for overnight loans to cover shortfalls, because they fell below their minimum deposits required for each bank to hold at any given time. Worldwide, there were billions in loans requested by the banks every night. Based on covering those shortfalls, the corporation will realize a profit of at least thirteen percent annually.

Many of those requests were banks which dealt in large, secure, hidden, accounts. When there was a withdraw or transfer of funds, they often resulted in a shortfall. Because of that shortfall, they paid a nice rate to cover it. The risk was small because most of the banks requesting

the short-term loans were protected by large, wealthy central banks. Julie knew who to trust. It was like shooting money in a barrel.

Jerome put four of the Gens on those investments specifically, and Julie gave them access to a secure site which allowed them to offer their services to those banks, although she had to limit them to a five-hundred-million-dollar ceiling. They could have invested the whole of the Gens funds in the overnight investments, but the company already determined to go another direction.

Jerome hoped to get in on the ground floor of new and exciting startups. Not only should the company make loans, they should purchase a percentage of those exciting companies, either through direct ownership or stocks.

Things were almost going too fast. He needed to hire more people to help the Gens, but they needed to be Gens because of the covert nature of the loans being made. He needed to hire several highly professional investment bankers to oversee the purchase and investment side of the company, those who could read the tea leaves.

Aaron pointed Jerome to two investment bankers, one an Israeli by the name of Azriel Jacobs, and the other an Ethiopian woman named Halima Mikal. Both were

shooting stars in investment and finance. They worked for Barclays Investment Bank in Tel Aviv. Azriel was another Israeli Gen. Halima was a smart and beautiful Ethiopian woman. Match Maker Aaron had hopes of the two hitting it off. Aaron knew and recruited Azriel on behalf of Jerome. Jerome set up an interview with Halima. He had no clue Aaron was trying to set him up.

Jerome took an office on the ninth floor. He left the tenth floor for conferences and banquets. He hired a new secretary, Linda House. She was a transplant from the US. Her husband was Jewish, and they made Aliyah three years ago.

“Mr. Waters, your one o’clock is here.”

“Okay, send her in.”

Jerome walked around the desk to pick up a pen he dropped. Halima opened the door and knocked him on the floor. She tried to help him up, but instead, she fell on him. He stood, and when he went to help her up, she looked straight into his eyes.

“When can you start?”

“Tomorrow, if you like.”

“Meet me here at 9AM, and I’ll show you your office and introduce you to everyone. Did you want to bring your secretary with you?”

“What?”

“I thought if you liked your current secretary with Barclays, we could hire her for you, and she could also come with you.”

“Oh, I would! I’ll ask her.”

Jerome helped her up and opened the door for her.
“I’ll meet you here tomorrow.”

“Okay, see you then.”

Jerome watched her all the way to the elevator.

Linda commented, “I didn’t realize it was spring?”

“What? What did you say?”

“Nothing, I was just talking to myself, I do that a lot.”

“Oh, me too. You know, she didn’t even ask what the salary was.”

“Sir, you must have had quite an effect on her.”

“Perhaps. She’s perfect for the job.”

Halima met him at his office precisely at 9AM the next morning. He showed her to her office and asked, “Will your secretary be joining you?”

“I don’t know. She asked about the pay and if it was lower, she wouldn’t come. I guess she’s not too dedicated. If her new salary was higher, she asked if you would pay for the taxi over. So, I guess it depends on you.”

“All right, Halima, I didn’t just hire you because you’re pretty, you are of course, but I had already vetted you before I even met you. I didn’t need an interview to hire you. Your reputation was the only interview I needed. Now, it’s important to keep my talent happy. If you want your secretary here, I’ll offer her twenty-five percent above her current salary and match her benefits, and if that isn’t sufficient, I’ll increase that offer until she says yes. So, it’s up to you now. Anyway, Azriel will start on Monday. I stole the both of you. Barclays will be angry.”

She answered, “I have worked with Azriel for four years. He’s a good investment banker, loan officer. We are two of Barclays best. Mr. Waters, I vetted you too. To have such a position with St. Paul as you did is rather amazing at your age.”

“Wait, what do you mean at my age?”

“Well, I meant nothing. I wanted to say what an accomplishment. Barclays has arranged contracts with St. Paul regarding a couple research companies here in Israel. St. Paul often backed small companies they were interested in with loan guarantees. We got one or two years ago, backed by them.”

Over the next couple of days, Halima and Azriel got themselves situated.

Julie drafted Jerome into another project. “Jerome, I’m not sure if you’re aware, but we collected two accounts a couple months back that we need some legal help to complete. One was an investment account worth just over four billion dollars, and the other was a stock portfolio worth about nine billion for a total of thirteen billion USD. We have taken our time to move on it so we could have a legal team in place to collect them. We’ve been sitting on the four billion for a while now, and we’re ready to put it to use. When completed, Israel Finance Group will receive half of those funds and the IDF will take the rest. Are you available? Also, I request that you increase the dollar amount for overnight investments to one and one-half billion dollars. Those overnights are growing and are too lucrative to invest pocket change.”

“Julie, I knew about the two accounts, but no one told me about their status or if they were available to the corporation. You mentioned we will receive half of the four billion, what’s the nature and status of the other, which I assume is tied up in stock since you called it a stock portfolio.”

“It is. We need you to put a team together so we can make a collection, but we didn’t want to overwhelm you. We Gens are capable of such legal matters, but we don’t have anyone licensed in the field. I can’t, because of my position, involve myself, but I have seven Gens who have this all figured out. So, we need you to lead the group. They can fill you in, and you will only have to act as a representative of Bank Hapialian. The Bank President, Leonard Cohen, is a good friend of General Levitt’s. He’s been an asset in covert operations in the past. He’s a nationalist who wants to help Israel succeed. Half of the money and stocks will go to the IDF. Cohen has drawn up all the legal paperwork to transfer the funds from Holstein’s estate, the stock, to private investors listed with the bank. Levitt is using money we previously took from Holstein and paying through the bank to purchase the stock. He will be acting as the secret investors. In the end, the money will go right back to the IDF through a dummy

Holstein account I set up for them. We need you there to represent the Hapialian Bank and present proof of payment for the stocks. Then, you will sign for and receive the stocks. The sale is so big that the bank managing the portfolio wanted legal representation when the sale was complete, in case anything was criminal, they wouldn't be held liable. If that weren't hilarious!"

"What's hilarious?"

"The president of the bank is as crooked as it gets. If he gets wind of what we're doing, I'll just blackmail him into compliance. So, you see, it's just a cakewalk made to look like a legal circus. Call me if he gives you any trouble."

"Okay, when do you plan on making this transfer?"

"We're thinking Friday. You need to fly to Germany to complete the sale. I have no clue why they chose Germany, and that's unnerving, so take your security detail. Let me take this opportunity to say you have three competent people on your security detail. I would use them anywhere."

"Yes, I'm fortunate to have them, and they have become my good friends to boot. Friday will work. I'll fly in and meet with your team on Thursday. Is one day

enough time for them? I can go on Wednesday if needed. I have a fantastic VP of operations in Azriel Jacobs. Have you met him yet?"

"I have not, but I heard he's one of the Israeli Gens."

"Yes, he is, and a highly intelligent one. He can handle anything I can. You can talk to him about anything. In fact, call him and introduce yourself."

"I might. Thursday will be fine. It will be a simple review for you. When you're done, let my team take the stocks. They'll bring them back to Rome. They have been observing the markets since we came across these stocks and have been working on a plan for slipping them into the market."

"Julie, are any of those stocks worth holding on to? We're an investment bank and we could offer the more valuable ones to future clientele."

"With these, we're better off converting them into cash. Cash isn't traceable like the stocks. If anyone or any agency were to get suspicious, let the trail lead to a dead-end, and not us. One of my assistants, Bella, is an expert Stockbroker. She can handle the load and sell them off in a couple weeks."

“All right, you should have taken this position. You’re more than capable.”

“It wasn’t offered, and I wouldn’t have taken it if it were. I like where I’m at because I can do so much for my friends here. Jerome, please stop being insecure about what you’re doing for us. You’re the right man for the position. We all knew that much about you already.”

“I believe you, Julie, Thank you.”

“No problem, I’ll have Belle get in contact with you and give you the hotel and time to meet on Thursday. Is your passport up to date? Oh, one last thing. Mr. Cohen is planning on calling you. He wants to talk with you before you leave; I guess check you out. That was one condition of him helping us. Truthfully, he wanted to make sure he wasn’t getting involved with an idiot. Jerome, this is the part where I laugh. God speed, my friend. Goodbye.”

Jerome had five more interviews on Thursday morning. He turned them over to Azriel and Halima.

Azriel was up to speed on everything. Halima was still in the dark, but a competent banker. He already made Azriel a VP and was planning on making Halima one in the next couple of weeks. He also needed to figure out how to bring her into the group. That will take more than just a

casual conversation and require the rest of the group, including the General and Aaron, to attend.

When Jerome and the others arrived at the meeting, Evan Parcels, the bank president and several high stepping lawyers confronted them about the sale. Parcels thought things were just a little suspicious. Jerome presented them with the paperwork from the Israeli bank, but they continued to be suspicious.

Jerome insisted, “We have all the proper paperwork for the purchase of the stocks. We have shown you the investment documents from our investors who offered the funds to the Hapialian Bank in Tel Aviv. What seems to be the problem?”

“We’ve not heard one word from Mr. Holstein, who requested when he first opened this portfolio that any sale be conducted here in Germany, and he was to be present.”

“You already know Mr. Holstein is dead, and we have an arrangement with his legal trustee to purchase these stocks. Frankly, if I had known why you made us come to Germany to complete this sale, I might have explained to you where you can put that idea.”

“Listen, Mr. Waters. We can hold the sale of these stocks up indefinitely.”

“I’m at a loss, Evan. What’s it you’re really after?”

“I don’t trust you or your group, Mr. Waters, and this sale is moving too fast to be on the up and up.”

Jerome knew Parcels was trying to cut a deal for himself. Julie told him he was a crook.

“One minute, Mr. Parcels, what’s your cell number?”

Evan gave Jerome his number and asked, “Why do you need my cell number?”

“One second, and we can clear this up.”

Jerome left the room and called Julie, “This guy, Parcels, is playing us. I believe he wants a cut of the sale and is trying to leverage us into giving him one.”

“I have so much on Mr. Parcels. Get his cell, and I’ll convince him with a few informational details to lighten up his good nature.”

“I have the number already. I’m one step ahead of you.”

Jerome gave Julie the number and waited three minutes before he returned to the room.

After several distractive comments, Evan Parcels' cell rang. He answered it, and half a minute later, his face turned white, well whiter.

“All right, I’ve been advised by my superiors to complete this sale, and told to wish Mr. Waters and his colleagues a good day. Thank you for your purchase and have a nice trip back to Israel.”

As Parcels and his group were leaving the room, Jerome said, “Thank you, Mr. Parcels. I hope we can do business again.”

“Let’s not get ahead of ourselves,” as the door closed behind them.

Belle spent the next half an hour thumbing through several certificates and confirmation of electronic transfers on her laptop. She was confident the certificates were authentic, and the proper transfers were made.

They congratulated each other and left for the hotel.

While Jerome was in Germany, Halima and Azriel hired three more investment gurus.

When Jerome got back to the office, he hired Roger Williams to run Human Resources and Elaine Ford as a Property Manager. Both migrated to Israel within the last

five years and were well qualified for the positions. Jerome needed to delegate more rather than trying to do things himself. He also went looking for a team of legal staff and several internal accountants. The three floors were filling up fast, but Jerome's workload was getting smaller, to making only the major decisions as it should be.

On the personal front, he like Halima and told her so. Afterward, they were observed more than a few times going to lunch together. Sometimes they were seen sitting next to the fountain talking for hours. It was an office rumor he met her family, and per Jerome's request, they allowed his mother and father to settle in Israel. So, Halima met his parents too.

Jerome's mother was ecstatic when they asked her to join an archeology group who was digging up Israel's past. He hired his father in maintenance. He was overqualified, being an engineer, but he wanted to keep busy and near his son.

Jerome was eager to fill up the rest of the building and made it Elaine's top priority. He figured the rent from the empty floors would cover a lot of the expenses of the building and more. It surprised him why the previous owners just didn't rent it out rather than run off. They lost

sixty million dollars. They could have made a great deal of money renting space, because it was at a premium and scarce. It was no problem for Elaine to find renters, although they had to meet the approval of Jerome. He was cautious about who rented space in the building.

The corporation was already profitable, and Julie was a big reason for its fast-financial growth.

She and her team converted the stocks, which brought in another ten billion USD. That was one billion over the estimated value, and half was made available to the corporation as needed.

Also, Jerome was putting his brain to work. He had a good sense of business about him and was hooking up with other business owners and leaders.

As Truman suggested, the Gens were reconsidering and asking for positions within the corporation. Jerome figured out how to use them outside the country as auditors. They'd fly into Tel Aviv once a month for training, and being quick learners, they returned to their current countries helping to build a sound international reputation.

At home, Jerome contributed frequently to one or another charity, making a name for himself and the company throughout the city, throughout all of Israel.

Zoe, Ramous and the Group arrived at the end of the month for an important Board Meeting. Mark and Dee did not accompany them. The couple left for St. Martin a couple weeks earlier. They wanted to check the property on the island to see whether they should live there.

The rest of the Group came a day early to meet Mel and Aaron to go sightseeing.

Zoe asked Julie to fly in so they could have a meeting prior to the Board Meeting. Zoe and Ramous stood looking out of the tenth-floor window at the Mediterranean.

Ramous turned to Jerome and said, “This is a nice view of the Med.”

“Yes, it is, that’s why I kept this floor for meetings and banquets, but we’re filling up fast, and I suspect we will need to move up here in the near future.”

Once everyone arrived, Zoe asked them to sit at the conference table that was setup for the meeting.

“This group of people, when I say group, we’re including Mark and Dee, control fifty-three percent of the funds for and outside of this corporation. Julie, could you please update us on what those funds are?”

“Sure, this is the breakdown of funds we have invested in banks around the world and where it came from. First investment made by Melissa and Catherine was \$263 million dollars. Both kept two hundred million in their own personal accounts. The second investment by the group was 2.5 billion, the third investment by the group was 6 billion, and the fourth and final investment by the group was 7 billion, which came to a total investment of 15.763 billion USD. Over the last seven months, the Israel Finance Group has profited from those funds in the amount of 743 million USD.”

She stopped and was going to sit when Zoe asked her to continue regarding the stocks.

“Jerome Waters, the CEO of Israel Finance Group, Inc., secured the Holstein stocks, the proceeds should go to the corporation. That gives the corporation 5.743 billion in liquid assets. Of those assets, 1.5 billion will be used for overnight shortfall loans controlled by the corporation’s short-term loan management group. The remaining 4.243 billion will be available to the corporation for investment loans, and other business ventures. I have set up accounts for both and will give the details to Jerome to do with as he sees fit. I have already transferred the funds into the respective accounts. Jerome, I have already given the

information to your crew so they won't miss any opportunities.”

“Okay, thanks Julie.”

“Next, I set up an investment account for the Gens and have transferred the 3 billion USD into that account. Those monies will eventually be paid back to the group as the corporation replaces it, based on profits paid out as dividends. The account itself will generate more than needed to pay out the two million annual return on investment for each Gen. A contingency will be kept in the account to cover unexpected shortfalls and keep the dividends secure for the future. Investment income above the contingency will go back to the Group until the 3 billion is paid back. I expect to recognize better than the seven percent return annually. Now for the group, I've created new accounts for each of you. Each account holds 1.294 billion USD. At a minimum seven percent return provides each account holder just over ninety million USD annually. I will get returns of better than seven percent, so it will actually be higher. Are there questions?”

Ramous' face turned beet red. He never was concerned about money because he had more than enough to live a comfortable life, but this kind of wealth nearly

made him pass out. It confused him when he realized it had no impact on the Gens in the room. He and Zoe will earn over one hundred eighty million dollars per year in investment income. He almost wanted to go out and buy expensive ice cream.

Julie explained the situation in such a way no one had questions.

Zoe said to Jerome, “Jerome, this is where the rubber meets the road. Everyone wants to move on with their lives. For some, that means distancing themselves from every bad memory of St. Paul and their previous lives. Most of our friends have had enough. Even this corporation upsets them. Many Gens want to move someplace quiet and dream of a home and garden. We also have several couples who plan to marry. That’s what this was all about. It’s about what we can provide for them. They’ve been through enough. It’s now up to you Jerome to make this company the titan it can be under your leadership.”

When the Board met the next night, the first item of business was the Group. The Group will no longer hold Board membership. So, they needed to choose twelve new Board Members. Julie provided a financial report for the corporation only. The company was surpassing all

expectations, and will have a successful year. The minutes reflected the need for a manager to control the assets of the corporation. Azriel asked if he could have that position, and they appointed him. The Group left the next morning for Madrid.

Somebody's Missing

One month later, Mark and Dee flew back into Madrid. They came back to finish one last operation. It was time to go looking for the Third Gens, and both wanted to be involved.

The day after their return, in the afternoon, Ramous, Truman, Art and Mark met for lunch at the Blue house. The Blue house was the larger of two properties Dee purchased near the Madrid airport, Mark brought up the missing Third Gens. Several weeks earlier, The Group had asked him to find out what he could about the other Gens. He turned that over to Mike, who was now back on the Oregon Coast.

“Ramous said, “We can call him. He probably forgot about it.”

Truman pulled his cell from his pocket and put it on speaker and then called Mike.

“Hello.”

Ramous answered, “Hi Mike, how's life, and how do you like the new house?”

“I love it. I’m in heaven, although I certain that’s not what you called about, not on Monday morning. What can I do for you?”

“Truman, Art, Mark, and I are sitting here talking about the Third Gens. Mark says you had taken the lead on that. I’m assuming that once you left, you forgot all about us, right?”

“Not at all, I’m still working on it. It has taken some time to get to this point where we can have this discussion. The Third Gens were perhaps one of the biggest secrets St. Paul had. For the last month I’ve interviewed almost fifty people, I came across a retired employee by the name of Don Carlson. He told me about a man who contracted with St. Paul by the name of Chen Le Wang.”

No one sitting at the table knew who he was.

Mike continued, “He was a Chinese Behavioral Scientist. He was an expert in social engineering and previously worked with the Chinese government. St. Paul heard about him and convinced him to seek asylum in the US. Carlson told me St. Paul brought him here to modify the Third Gens by engineering a more complicit mentality. Okay, so I don’t know what all that means, but I believe he helped them create the Third Gens. If you asked

me, what I have seen of the Third Gens, he failed, but according to Carlson, he knows who and where they are.”

That was the end of the conversation until they could invite Matthew to meet with them. They needed his input before they continued further. To do so would only produce redundant conversation.

Ramous asked, “Can we call you back tomorrow? We’d like Matthew to be involved with this discussion.”

“Yes, of course. Talk to you then.”

The next day, Matthew joined them at the Blue house for lunch. Once they all sat down, Ramous called Mike back.

“Hello, Mike. I bet you thought you were through with us, eh?”

“I suspect that will never happen. You will always need an asset state side. Is Matthew there?”

Matthew answered, “Yes, I’m here, Mike. How are you, Sir?”

“Would you stop calling me ‘Sir’! I’m well, thank you. Matthew, do you recognize the name Don Carlson or Chen Le Wang?”

“Yes, Le Wang. He was a behavioral specialist. He was instrumental in training and establishing control of the Third Gens. I haven’t heard his name in a long time. In fact, I had almost forgotten about him. What can I tell you?”

“I found out he’s the person who knows how many and where the remaining Third Gens are being held.”

“Mike, do you know where he lives, and do you believe he will tell us if we find him?”

“I don’t, but it will stay that way until we ask him, right?”

“Yes, your right.”

“Carlson told me; Mr. Le Wang turned against St. Paul when he found out the direction of the Angel Project. Currently, he’s living in the US, in Pensacola, Florida. I talked with over fifty people to find him. I’m hoping he can help us.”

“That’s good if he has turned against St. Paul. He was not a nice man when he was working for them. He was a psychological nightmare, if you ask me. Now I’m free. I can put together and recognize all the psychological brainwashing this man did to my team and others. Until I

read the bible, I had no problem committing sadistic crimes against anyone, and he's just as responsible for that as anyone else at St. Paul. I'm shaking just thinking about it."

"Right now, you're the only one with the answers. Do we need to stop? "

"I'll be fine to continue, but give me a minute."

Matthew asked the rest, "What's for lunch? You invited me for lunch, and I'm starving."

Truman looked at Matthew and said, "Toasted cheese sandwiches."

Everyone became quiet until Ramous broke out laughing.

Matthew spoke up, "Hey! I like cheese."

The men would have eaten lunch too, if they could have gotten someone to make it, but nobody wanted to cook.

"Mike, these guys are a bunch of liars. They invited me to lunch, not lunch, lunch."

Mike said, "You didn't have to tell me that. Matthew, we need to go meet Mr. Le Wang and ask him where the rest of the Third Gens are. He may not tell us, but I'm certain he won't tell us over the phone, so at least

two of us will have to talk to him in person. You and I should go.”

“I’m reluctant, but I’ll do whatever to help my fellow Gens. When do I leave?”

“We should leave by next week. Can you get here by then? No one else needs to go. Are you listening, Mark, Truman? You need to put teams together if he should tell us where they are and be ready to go once he does.”

Truman said, “We will have them assembled by the time Matthew gets to Oregon.”

“Okay, let me know when and where I need to pick you up. Anything else?”

Ramous answered, “We’ll call you if anything comes up. Later, Mike.”

Truman said, “I heard a group of Third Gens are being kept in China, so we need a team that includes Gens who are Chinese or familiar working undercover there.”

The men agreed Art and Truman would create three teams, one specifically to infiltrate China.

Mike and Matthew landed in a humid Pensacola, Florida. They registered at a nearby Holiday Inn. Both had to put on a change of clothes from the humidity bath, but

they weren't in the room five minutes when Mike's cell rang. It was Truman.

“Mike, you won't believe me when I tell you, but we have a Second Gen who knows Le Wang well. When looking for team members for the China operation, I came across a Gen who worked undercover for St. Paul. They assigned him to Le Wang and moved him in across the street from him. That lasted for two years. I guess they became friends, and he seems to know Le Wang well. It might be a good idea to send him to you and you could take him when you approach Le Wang.”

“Is he willing to join us, and if so, can he leave tonight?”

“Yes, he's packing now and should be in Pensacola late tomorrow morning. He gets in at 11 AM, your time, Northwest Airlines, so don't do anything until he gets there. Oh, his name is Ron Parker.”

“Okay, we'll meet him at the terminal.”

Mike and Matthew spent the day looking for Chen's address. Once they located it, they staked it out until they saw Chen leave the property. After finding Chen, they returned to the hotel.

After watching two movies, adventure movies, they went for a swim in the hotel's pool. Matthew has never been swimming before. He jumped in the shallow end, got out and stretched out in the hot tub next to the pool.

Mike spent two hours acting like a kid, swimming and jumping from the diving board, attempting cannonballs. Eventually, he joined Matthew in the hot tub.

“That’s weird. You’ve never been in a swimming pool before. I can’t imagine anyone your age not knowing how to swim. There’s room at the vineyard for a pool at the back of the hotel. You should ask Ramous and or Zoe to have one put in. I’m sure they would put one in.”

“It’s not like I have done it before and miss it. I didn’t like jumping into the cold water. I might ask them, however, to put in a hot tub because I could get used to this.”

The next morning the two met Parker at terminal six. They greeted each other and returned to the hotel.

“Ron, if we’re here tonight, you get the floor. We have an air mattress you can sleep on, and it’s comfortable. How well do you know Le Wang?”

“I know him well. I lived across the street from him for two years. He disappeared one day, and I never found out what happened to him. I assumed St. Paul moved him on short notice. They never told me why, and I didn’t ask.”

Matthew said, “We found his address here in Pensacola and saw him leave his house yesterday. So, if you’re ready, we can go now and speak with him. Do you understand what we’re after?”

“Yes, Truman and Ramous told me what we were doing. I understand. I’m looking forward to seeing him and sure he will help us.”

An older Chinese man answered the door. He looked at Ron for a moment, and then he stepped forward to shake his hand.

“Hello Ron, how are you? It has been too much time.”

“Hello, my friend. I’m fine, and how are you? Yes, it has been too long. You disappeared with no warning.”

“Please come in and bring your friends with you.”

Chen explained how he ended his contract with St. Paul over moral issues. He didn’t say what those issues were until Ron explained what he was.

“I’m a Second Gen, Chen. St. Paul moved me in across the street from you. After we became friends, I stopped giving information to St. Paul, anything that could hurt you. I hope they didn’t move you because of anything I said or did.”

“No, you didn’t hurt me at all. I knew your situation, and we were and are friends, so we’re good.”

Ron’s face turned the most interesting color red.

“Okay, please meet my friends Mike Davies and Matthew Hayes. We are looking for a group of Gens and hope you can help us out.”

“Who are you looking for?”

“We are looking for the remaining Third Gens and understand you worked with them in the beginning and might know where St. Paul has taken them. We intend to free them. Can you help us?”

“Ron, I will do what I can.”

Chen left the room and returned with a notepad. He opened the notepad and handed it to Ron.

The open page of the pad listed all the names of the Third Gens and their assigned location.

Matthew asked, “Is this current?”

Chen turned to Matthew, “I don’t know, Matthew. I didn’t recognize you at first. You have such a peaceful expression. I’m not used to seeing Third Gens looking so calm. Generally, they’re intense.”

“That makes two of us, Mr. Le Wang. I’m not used to seeing you so calm either.”

“I hated the work I did for St. Paul. They had me over a barrel, so to speak, and often pressured me to do things I didn’t agree with. They promised to deport me back to China if I didn’t. The Chinese would have shot me on sight. I’m so sorry. Ron, you must have noticed I disappeared one day. I went on the run. I was hiding until the Angel Project came up in the news. They were finally arresting all of those involved. I didn’t even think. How did you find me?”

Mike answered, “Do you recall the name, Don Carlson?”

“Yes, he helped me hide from St. Paul. He’s a good man. He’s the only one who could have told you where I was, and I assume he would not have told you unless it was important, and you would bring no harm.”

“You’re right, he told me, and it’s important, and we mean you no harm. We need to free the rest of the Third Gens before they’re killed or worse.”

“That list should be current. Although, I heard six died in Canada, and the Chinese murdered another eighteen. That leaves seventy-two.”

Of the seventy-two left, twenty-four were in Canada, twelve were in Columbia, eighteen were in Ukraine, and the last eighteen were in China.

Ron said, “Thank you, Chen, for your help. Can we do anything for you?”

He turned towards a doorway at the back of the room. A middle-aged woman and a teenage boy walked out.

“This is my family, my wife, Sue Lin, and my son Zack. That’s not his real name, but he didn’t like the one we gave him. St. Paul paid me handsomely, and I have enough money to get by for the rest of my life.”

“Chen, please tell no one you saw me, or that we met. That would be dangerous for us both. Do you understand?”

“More than you realize, Ron. Thank you for coming by. It was good to see you again.”

He walked them to the door and said goodbye. Matthew and Ron returned to Madrid the next day. Mike went back to the coast.

The four teams met in the second hanger so no one would disturb them.

Mark stood up in front of the group.

“It seems Canada will be the easiest operation. Art will take the Canadian operation. Zoe and Cat will take the next most difficult operation, Columbia. Mark spoke Spanish, so he joined the Columbian team. Ukraine was the next, and Truman led that operation. The final and most challenging operation was China. Ron took that operation with only a group of three.

Mark asked, “Ron, are you going to be okay with only three operatives?”

“Yes, we all speak several dialects of Chinese and Swahili.”

“What?”

They all stared at Ron.

“We’re good to go.”

Art and his team flew into Ontario and found the Gens at a hospital. They told him they were happy where they were. St. Paul abandoned them when Pollen died.

The team leader said, “They left us in a locked basement. We broke out and did the natural thing, applied for jobs with a local hospital, and now we have lives here. We’re part of the community. We love it here.”

They had no intention of leaving Ontario.

Art took all their names and gave them a number should they change their mind. He explained to them how they could retire with a great retirement but didn’t give too much away regarding the other Gens. They assumed all the Gens were dead except for them, and they were keeping a low profile. Art decided to keep them in the dark about the others. So, his team returned to Madrid empty-handed.

Zoe, Cat and their team were just leaving when Art got back. So he joined them. When they landed in Bogota, they were stopped by customs.

One guard took a liking to Cat. He finally confessed if she would go out with him, he’d let the group go. He had a friend hold the rest of the team until he and Cat left the airport. Once they were out of sight, the friend, guard, let them go.

The team rented two vans because they had to travel just over three hundred miles to Pasto, San Juan De Pasto, near the border of Ecuador. Fortunately for Cat, Zoe made everyone put a locator patch in their shoe. They found Cat standing beside the road on the way out of town. As they picked her up, they didn't notice the man in his underwear tied up to a tree.

The list included an address in Bogota. It was a business, a Dentist office. Zoe walked in to check it out. It looked nothing like a Dentist's office. She walked back out to the van and invited her team to join her. There were at least a dozen desperados inside.

The team waited at the door while Zoe went back inside. She asked the man sitting in the middle of the room, "Where are the Gens?"

The whole group stood up and approached her. She could have taken them all, but she wanted it over fast. So, once they stood up, the team rushed the door and put everyone on the floor. She grabbed the man sitting in the middle of the room and said, "So far, everyone in the room is out cold. Did you see how fast my friends put them down? Now, I know your comrades are some very big guys. Did you think I didn't notice that?"

“Si, I understand.”

“I could tell them to finish the job, and call the morgue, but I’m sure you don’t want me to do that, do you?”

“No. What do you want?”

“Where are the Gens? Do you know what I’m talking about?”

“No.”

“Okay, guys, finish the job.”

“Wait, wait, I know what you’re talking about. You’re talking about the doctors, right?”

“Yes, where are they?”

“They were taken to Lima two weeks ago.”

“Can you tell me why?”

“I don’t know. They fired us from our jobs too. We were security guards. Now, we don’t have jobs.”

They got back into the vans and drove to an open space to stop and talk.

Art said, “It’s a long drive to Lima. We should drive back to Bogota and fly.”

Zoe answered, “No, we should give it three more minutes and return to the Dentist’s office. They are there. I didn’t want to kill everyone to retrieve them.”

Five minutes later, the team pulled up to the office just in time to catch the security guards leading the Gens out the front door. They quickly got out and put the guards out again.

They directed the twelve Gens to get into the vans, and they drove off.

Cat said, “Hello people. Are you okay?”

The lead Gen said, “What’s going on? Why and where are you taking us?”

“We are freeing you from St. Paul, and we’re taking you out of the country unless you want to stay here. We can drop you off at the next corner if you like.”

“Who are you?”

“We are like-minded people who want to give you a better life, a life free of St. Paul and captivity.”

Cat explained to them who they were and what lay ahead should they be interested. They were extremely excited to have their freedom.

Cat suggested they send a corporate jet into Bogota rather than deal with airport security again, especially with an additional twelve illegals.

The team took the twelve Gens to stay in a resort just outside Bogota. A day later, Aaron and Mel arrived at the international airport in Bogota. According to their flight plan, they were picking up two Israeli diplomats and flying them back to Israel. There was an Israeli insignia plastered on the side of the plane. While they were on the tarmac waiting for the diplomats, the team with the twelve Gens boarded the flight.

Fifteen minutes after the team entered the plane, two Columbian women entered, and the plane closed the hatch and took to the air.

It turns out the two women were Massad and were undercover in Columbia looking for a missing Israeli business owner. It turns out they found the man's body at a morgue. Someone robbed and murdered him. The reason they sent in the Massad was because the man had a Top-Secret Clearance with the Israeli government, he made and sold a new type of disposable silencer used by the Massad.

The two planned to fly out on commercial airlines until Cat requested the flight.

When they got back to Madrid, Mel, Aaron, and the two agents continued to Israel. Cat joined them.

Mark sent for Cary and told the Gens she would take care of them and answer all their questions.

Mark asked Ramous, once he could pry him from Zoe, “Have you heard from the other teams yet?”

“Yes, I heard from Truman. He called on a satellite phone and requested a plane. They’re in Poland, and the plane should pick them up tonight. We sent in a private Israeli diplomatic flight to pick up Israeli’s Ambassador to Poland. They asked him to come home for a couple weeks of vacation. I’ve not heard anything from Ron or his team yet.”

Mark said, “All right, I hope everything works out for them.”

Since Mark was back, Ramous and Zoe took a helicopter to return Matthew to the vineyard. The couple already planned to spend a week there.

Late the next morning, an Israeli 727 taxied up to the Hanger. Truman, his team, and eighteen Third Gens exited the plane. They were all speaking Ukrainian.

Mark asked, “What happened, how did you end up in Poland?”

“We found out the Third Gens were being held and used by the Ukrainian Military. The address Chen gave us was for a military base. While we were snooping around the base, a woman approached us. When she saw us looking, she asked what we were looking for. I said flippantly, doctors. I didn’t expect her reply. She said a group of people looking like doctors escaped from the base a year earlier. Then, asked me if those were the doctors? Of course, she said with her hand out, expecting payment for the answer. I offered her a hundred thousand hryvnia if she could tell me where the group went. She knew right where they were. When they escaped, they split and went two different directions. The women ran one way, and the men the other. Both groups ended up in opposing gang territories. She told me she sees the women on the street prostituting and pointed us to the corner where they were working. She told me the men were working for the rival gang making and selling drugs.”

Mark interrupted, “Imagine if we never learned of them.”

“I know. That was not a good situation for anyone. We found one Gen woman standing half beaten to death, asking us if we were looking for a good time. Two men were standing back. They were her handlers. I told her no, and she needed to come with us. The two goons confronted us, so I let Sara put both of them down. I explained who we were and asked her where the others were. Just then, three other men came walking our way escorting six women. When they saw their friends on the ground, they ran at us. Sara looked at me, I shrugged my shoulders, and she put those men down too. Only four of the six were Gens. They directed us back to the gang’s bar where the other two women were being abused.

“I sent Sara and Talia in. I stuck my head in the door, but they didn’t need my help. Five minutes later, they came walking out with the other two Gens. I couldn’t help myself from laughing, watching those two little girls beat up all those big burly gang members. The five men were at the other gang’s headquarters. The woman said for another two thousand hryvnia, she would show us the way. On the way there, she asked us to leave the short blonde guy alone. He was her son. Fortunate for us, the other five Gens were standing outside, getting lectured by a tall headstrong idiot, gang member. Sara approached him and put her hand to the

back of his neck. He went cross-eyed and fell to the ground. We all left quickly. The woman let us stay for a couple days. We didn't even consider the fact we forgot to get transportation for so many people. Things happened so fast we didn't get time to set up for retrieval. We had to act when things turned our way. It didn't matter; I wasn't going to let them abuse those Third Gens another minute. They are so docile. It's unbelievable. Apparently, Chen did his work well. So, we had twelve of the eighteen Gens, but we had two street gangs looking for us. We were all excited by the possibilities."

"Where were the rest of the Gens?"

"Well, the next day, I sent Harold to find us a school bus, one big enough to transport everyone together. I had him park it in a parking lot two streets away from us. We learned the rest of the Gens were being forced to work at a military hospital off base. Before we went after the others, I sent Sara, Talia, Johnson, and the twelve Gens to Warsaw. Warsaw seemed like the safest place to go and blend in. No one had passports, so we couldn't get out of the country the normal way, and once we kidnapped the other Gens, they'd be looking for us everywhere. So, they took the first bus, and I sent Harold out to buy another one. We waited to give them time to get to Warsaw before we

collected the others. So, two days later, we made our way to the hospital. Once at the hospital, it was a piece of cake. They posted only two guards at the entrance, and the Gens were easy to find, because each one was followed by a security guard. I put Harold in a wheelchair and pushed him around, and every time we came to a guard, he knocked them out. We collected the last six Gens, ran to the bus, and drove to Warsaw. We could not find a plane big enough to fly us out of the country. We had no choice but to go through the border. We were lucky we had the right amount of money to pay our way through. Once in Poland, it was just a matter of waiting for the plane. Oh, one last thing, Mark, and it will probably surprise you as much as it did me. We had two stowaways.”

He pointed towards the corner of the hangar where a middle-aged woman and a young blonde-haired man were standing.

“I’m sure we can help them out. What can you say about a mother who’s trying to protect her son?”

Talia interjected, “Mark, the seven women are in bad shape, even for Gens. They didn’t know how to fight or protect themselves. That’s why they were such easy prey for those gangs. How they escaped the military compound,

I have no clue, and they refused to talk about it. They may have killed a guard or two and aren't dealing with it well. Since Matthew has a team with him, it might be a good idea to hook these women up with the females in his team to help them acclimate."

Mark answered, "I'll have Cary contact them and ask if they will meet with them."

Matthew suggested they send them to Tel Aviv, so his team could deal with them there. He said that was much better than a busy airport.

Mark turned to Matthew. "We still haven't heard from Ron yet."

"I'm confident he'll succeed. I'm sure of it."

It was four days before Mark heard from Ron's team. One member radioed, telling Mark they were onboard a cargo ship pulling into Darwin. The member said, "Ron and three others broke into a Chinese research facility and freed the Gens. The building was only full of researchers. Sir, they were continuing the Angel Project. Ron stayed behind to pull a fire alarm. Once everyone was out of the building, he blew it up. He directed the Gens to two waiting vans, and he was the last one to leave the facility. He was running to jump into the van when he was

shot with a PPE. We pulled him into the van, but he was already dead. We couldn't save him.”

Mark asked, “Who is this?”

“This is Rocky Li, and we're on an Australian freighter, pulling into Darwin. We should disembark in an hour. We'll seek asylum, until you can come get us, in the Israeli consulate.”

“I'll call the General and have him get you released, and we will send a plane to meet you. Where's Ron's body?”

“We knew we could not let the Chinese get it, so we brought it with us on board ship. We pretended he was luggage and put him in a duffle bag. Although we didn't like doing so, we couldn't get him on board any other way. Then, we buried him at sea so no one could have his remains.”

“Okay, we'll have someone there tomorrow. Call me when you're released.”

“All right, sir. Goodbye.”

Mark was alone when he received the call. He didn't say anything, but was asked several times if something was wrong. He only said Ron's team made

contact and the last group of Gens would arrive in a couple days.

Three days later, after all the Gens arrived and were being processed, they had a memorial for Ron. Ron was the first Gen to be killed in action.

Mark got up and said, “He was a selfless hero who sacrificed himself for others and he was our family, and the only family he knew. Remember him always.”

The Group had a plaque, with his picture engraved, put out in front of the corporate building in Tel Aviv. It told of his sacrifice.

Human Engineering

Mark and Dee were planning to return to St. Martin, when Truman pulled him aside and told him he wanted to go over some files with him, the ones in the suitcases he brought back from Egypt

“Mark, can we meet in the office? I have an issue I need to talk to you about.”

Once in the office Truman said, “I’ve been sitting on this information since I got here, and have continued to keep it to myself because of the startup of Israel Finance Group, but it’s time we go over those files I took from Canon’s safe. You will find them more than interesting. These files include a list of seventy-six judges on various benches, and twenty-three senators and congressmen who are still being paid by St. Paul. They also include the names of all the foreign dignitaries involved with the Angel Project. I’m sure many heads will roll when this list gets

into the right hands. The files include all their illegal activities, which are important and will help bury the project.”

“Was Canon in contact with any of these people?”

“I heard him speak with a few people and made several demands over the phone, but I don’t know to what extent of that contact. It sounded like they were pretty much finished with him.”

“Yeah, he probably has become a liability.”

“Probably. Now, I want to talk to you about the different groups of Gens. I’m going to tell you what you already know, but I want to go over them, anyway. So, there are five groups of Gens St. Paul created. There were the imperfect First Gens, who are dead now. Next, are the Second Gens, what’s left of us, including me. We are the closest to normal human beings they could create. There are the mysterious Third Gens. Ninety-six Third Gens who were well-hidden secrets to St. Paul’s master plan. It’s sad that we lost any of them. I know we lost twenty-four amazing individuals, scientists when St. Paul murdered them.”

“Yes, we did.”

“We already know they were working on the Fourth and Fifth Gens when everything fell apart. Then, the Fourth Gens who were the disposable test group for the Fifth Gens, management, were used for developing a method of transferring an adult human brain into a new skeleton. We know they were murdered and discarded after two years of growth. Honestly, Mark, this group was the most disturbing group of them all. St. Paul kidnapped homeless men, women, and children from all around the world, and removed their minds and brainstems to insert into a new skeleton. It was murder. I suspect there were hundreds murdered with the consent of foreign and domestic government officials for their insane quest to become immortal. I said new skeleton because the Third Gens created a new skeleton while developing the Fourth Gens. It looks just like a natural skeleton in texture, but is stronger and more acceptable to the stem cells.”

“Is it a different kind of alloy?”

“I don’t know, but it’s much stronger and you can’t tell it from a normal skeleton. Hold the questions because I’m only laying the ground work for something else.”

“Okay. Sorry, I didn’t mean to interrupt.”

“No worries. The Fifth Gens, once they could reproduce the process of growing viable Fourth Gens, they intended to use the process to put the minds of everyone in leadership into the new skeleton. Afterward, St. Paul management could live forever, because they could reinsert themselves into a new skeleton every time the flesh grew old. Once every important person was inserted into their new body, it was St. Paul’s intention to rule the world. Are you following me, Mark?”

“Yes, I am. I knew that much about St. Paul, but I understand they never made it to the Fifth Generation, and I believe there was to be a Sixth Generation, a military type who would be security for management.”

“Right, actually, they made it to the Fifth generation and were ready to begin implantation. And, yes, as you said, there would be a Sixth Gen, but I wasn’t ready to mention that yet, but that’s the whole reason I’m saying things the way I’m saying them.”

“All right, but we knew about them.”

“Okay, although there’s something you don’t know yet. Even though the Fourth Gens had served their purpose and the Fifth Gens were ready for full implementation, there was a Sixth Gen created ahead of schedule because of

an unforeseen circumstance. So now, I'm going to tell you how it happened. I found this information in Canon's safe. It was marked Top Secret. Do you recall the name Roger Pollen?"

"Yes, I know who Roger Pollen is. He was one of the founding fathers of St. Paul."

"Yes, he was, and he had a son named Roger Pollen Jr. One night Roger Jr. was driving south on Interstate 5, when he fell asleep at the wheel just north of Olympia, Washington. He hit another car head-on, killing both himself and the other driver. Mark, I'm going to be redundant. St. Paul created the process for Fifth Gens several years ago. Management was only waiting for the right time to transplant themselves into the skeletons. If they hadn't been stopped when they were, I suspect all the management of St. Paul would be Fifth Gens right now. Per Pollen Senior's request, St. Paul sent a team of Third Gens to prepare and retrieved Pollen Junior's body before the morgue could process him and had it flown to a lab in Toronto, Canada. Pollen wanted to use his son for the first implantation as a Fifth Gen. They removed all the necessary parts and placed them into the container to prepare for his recreation. Well, St. Paul secured the wrong body. To complete their failure, the Canadian lab they

brought him to didn't realize it wasn't his son. Instead, they placed the other man, the other victim, into the container. When Pollen Sr. found out, he told them to discard him. The Third Gens, working on him, refused to do so. Apparently, those Third Gens got ahold of a bible and read it, so they refused to kill him once he was viable. Pollen had those Third Gens murdered and brought in another team. By that time, the subject was to the point where they usually applied the Neurostimulation process. Pollen didn't want an unknown to become the first Fifth Gen because they reserved Fifth Gens for St. Paul management only."

"So, Pollen's son was to be the first Gen? How come we haven't heard of him?"

"That's because it never happened. They retrieved the wrong body, and that's going to blow your mind. It did mine. Through a CIA contact of Pollen's, the CIA found out about him. Consequently, they told Pollen to turn him into a Sixth Gen. They were curious to find out if it could be done. They could always discard him if it didn't turn out. It was a risk because the Sixth Gens were not supposed to begin with an adult. The intention was to create the Sixth Gens by the same process as the Second and Third Gens, only with different training. It was the intention of the CIA and an opportunity for St. Paul to test a new

Neurostimulation process, one allowing them to take an adult human being, wipe their memory, and replace it with new memories. Under the old process, they could create memories in a fetus, because the fetus had no initial memories. It was much more difficult to erase the memories of a human with a past and replace those memories with new ones. This new process was a research child supported and encouraged by the CIA.”

“Wow, I never heard about that.”

“I assume it was top secret, and not too many people did. So the reason behind the CIA’s request was they wanted to find out if they could use current military personnel and put them through the process. They weren’t interested in creating new bodies for US soldiers, but the new Neurostimulation process could help with specialized training. That way they could build a super soldier using current personnel, particularly Special Forces. So, the team wiped his past and trained him with all the advanced military training they could provide, including martial arts, weaponry, logistics, and machinery. He was to be a one-man wrecking crew. As part of the research, Pollen wanted to test the Sixth Gen himself. They made the man believe he was one of Pollen’s security guards. The man exceeded every expectation, but the doctor missed a step, whether on

purpose or not, the test subject retained some memories from his previous life. He performed his duties, but refused to do things against his moral conscious. The subject was a Christian before the accident. Once established as a security guard for Pollen, he refused to kill other human beings. When he refused to do so, they determined they couldn't use him. He was damaged goods. Pollen was going to have him murdered, but the CIA intervened and made Pollen bring him back to his old self through the process, so Pollen drugged him and put him into the container where they used the new Neurostimulation process again to reset his mind back prior to the accident.”

“I get a feeling that we know who this person is. Is that right?”

“I'm getting there. It turns out that was the intention of the CIA all along, because they wanted to find out if a person could survive the Neurostimulation process more than once. It appeared to work the second time. So, when they finished, they made the man believe he spent two years in a coma in Seattle. He woke up in a St. Paul owned and operated convalescent home set up just for the experiment. The man woke up talking about his wild dreams. From the time he woke up, St. Paul continued to observe him for further research in case anything went

wrong. They concluded he might become mentally ill or go mad. Since then, he has inherited a bed-and-breakfast on the Oregon coast, after his parents died. He now owns that same bed-and-breakfast on that same Oregon coast. Can I make it any clearer?”

“Are you telling me Ramous Rignor is a Gen?”

“Yes, I told the whole story to tell you Ramous is a Gen. That’s what the files said. They mention him by name. Those same files stated he doesn’t recall any of it. Mark, until recently, Canon has been receiving updates from the CIA. The last communication between Canon and the CIA said Ramous was killed in an explosion on the Oregon Coast. So, they believe he’s dead.”

“Yes, they blew up a cabin that he and Zoe were staying in on the coast. We were one step ahead of them, and both were already on their way to Spain by then. I don’t understand how he didn’t find out?”

“That’s because the only way to know we’re a Gen is by the titanium skeleton. He doesn’t have titanium bones. Ramous has the stronger compound skeleton but looks like the real thing, like I said already. If you cut him open, you’d see material that looks like real bones. Besides, the St. Paul Corporation has kept close ties on him. They

provided him with two Third Gen medical staff in Portland. Since the accident, he has counseled with the two specialists, and has done so faithfully. Those two Doctors are in Canada now.”

“I’m dizzy! My mind just went blank. How come you’re just telling me now? Why haven’t you told him?”

“I wasn’t sure how to. It seemed logical to tell you first. It has been hard, because I can only imagine his blissful ignorance. You, Mark, have been in another world. I didn’t want to provide any more stress on you and figured we could deal with it at the right time. I guess this is the right time.

“Ramous was one of St. Paul’s best-kept secrets until I raided Canon’s safe. His safe contained all the files of Pollen, the CIA, and the research diaries of both Canadian Third Gen teams.”

“Well, even though Ramous was a good police chief, he never excelled in any of our current operations. You’d think something should have given him away, a reflex or situation.”

“I have been observing him too. He honestly doesn’t know, although the files state there’s a trigger to bring all those memories back, all the memories about what

happened to him. The last Third Gen doctor put a marker, a subliminal marker, in his head, and if used will unlock those two years. He'd recall everything. That marker is 'Attention, Chukua diapers mbali'. Swahili for 'Attention, Take the diapers off'. That's what Pollen said every time he checked on Ramous. He wanted them to push Ramous harder until he failed. He never did. The word 'Attention' was added so Pollen wouldn't trigger him. It must be said exactly as I just told you. I found that information in an obscure note written and encrypted by one of the Third Gen researchers. I don't know if anyone else figured it out, but I did. There were three pages of research called 'Subliminal Reactivation.' Right after was that obscure note regarding the term Pollen used with the word 'Attention' proceeding it. To me it was a dead give-a-way as the term was written in Swahili."

Truman showed Mark all the files on Ramous. There was a picture of him dead on a slab and then again when he emerged from the container, and then again one year later.

He looked exactly as he did two years after he lay dead on the slab. The accident broke his neck; otherwise, there was no physical damage to his body.

Mark said, “It’s amazing how he came out looking as he did before they recreated him.”

“Right. The Third Gens found it interesting too. They figured there was an element in the brainstem directing all the cells in the body to recreate themselves in a particular order, creating each one of us as individuals. Mark, Gens look exactly like they would as if they were never put through the process.”

“Wow. That boggles the mind.”

Mark looked at the diaries in which the Third Gens marveled how there was no difference between the lifeless body on the slab and the person created through the process. It contained several hypotheses, although nothing concrete.

“Truman, let’s keep this between us. I don’t want to freak anyone out yet, especially Zoe and Ramous. I can’t believe this. He’s so human. Have you watched how tentative he’s about things? Without question, he’s a brave man, but he’s clumsy, just like the rest of us humans. It’s hard to believe they were able to keep this from him.”

Zoe was standing just outside the door and spoke up, “That’s because he’s a trusting man. He had no reason to consider such an idea, such a violation.”

Zoe walked in; she was crying.

Truman said, “I’m sorry, Zoe. I wanted to tell Mark before I told anyone else. Are you okay?”

“No, I’m not. I can guarantee Ramous knows nothing about this. It will break his heart.”

She cried again.

Mark said, “We don’t need to tell him. It can be our secret.”

“We have to tell him. I can’t keep a secret this big from him. If he finds out we knew and didn’t tell him, the consequences will be devastating. We have to tell him.”

She walked out of the room. She originally came looking for Mark to tell him she and Ramous planned on taking a helicopter back to Tuscany within the next couple days. It was a property she and Ramous enjoyed, especially the walks in the countryside.

Zoe kept quiet for the rest of the day. Ramous questioned her about her quietness. She told him she was moody, and said a day shopping with Mel, Cat, and Dee in Milan would snap her out of it. Zoe was planning to shop for new casual clothes to wear when she and Ramous were

at the vineyard. Aaron and Mel flew in, and Mel joined them.

Aaron found Mark and Ramous and asked them if they wanted to accompany him back to Israel. He told them the General set up a dinner with the Zion Orphanage because of a three-million-dollar donation from the Israel Finance Group. The donation was made in gold, a pallet full of gold. He was planning on flying back within the hour. They planned to return the next day so he could pick up Mel. Both men went back with him. After saying goodbye and kissing all around, they left.

They arrived at the Israeli Air-force Base just in time to catch a van full of soldiers heading for the dinner. The IDF planned to present the gold on behalf of the Israel Finance Group, while Ramous and Mark were going to join Jerome in accepting their gratitude after the dinner, on behalf of the corporation.

While traveling along the highway near the Lebanese border, they came across an auto accident. The soldiers got out to help. Once they did, a group of armed Lebanese soldiers surrounded them. They took the group into Lebanon through an underground tunnel. Twenty

minutes later, they were tied up and put in a cell, with two guards posted at the door.

One of the Israeli soldiers said, “One guard said to the other that they’re going to kill all the soldiers and hold the Americans hostage. He said they should fetch a good ransom from the US.”

A rather stiff-looking man walked in and grabbed one soldier by the collar. He shook him around, asking him, “How many tunnels does the Israeli military know of?”

It was clear the young man didn’t know, but the officer pulled a pistol and put it up to his head. When he did, five other men entered the room, waving rifles around.

Mark knew they would kill all the soldiers, and start with the young man.

Mark shouted, “Attention, Chukuwa diapers mbali.”

One soldier was an African who spoke Swahili, told the other soldiers what Mark shouted. It didn’t come out like he expected it to. They all laughed.

The stiff-looking man turned to Mark and said, “Why did you say, Attention, Chukua diapers Mbali? Are you making fun of us, American scum?”

Mark now realized he mispronounced one word, but the important stiff-looking man said it perfectly.

The man asked Mark again, “Why did you say that?”

Mark didn’t reply but looked intently at Ramous, who now had a blank expression on his face.

Before anyone could move, Ramous put the stiff-looking man and the five soldiers out cold. The two guards standing at the door ran into the room. Ramous put both of them out.

Then he disappeared through the door. The Israelis struggled to get out of their restraints so they could help Ramous. The shots must have lasted for twenty minutes when Ramous returned through the cell door. He untied everyone and led them to a waiting van. He picked up a soldier to drive, put Mark and the rest in the back, took a seat next to the driver, and told him to drive to the nearest Israeli border.

One moment later, they stopped. There was a thud. Ramous pulled the driver from the driver’s seat and ran back into the cell. He grabbed the stiff man and dragged him out, putting him in the driver’s seat, telling him to drive to the nearest Israeli border. The Israeli government

wanted the man driving for killing three young soldiers almost a year ago. Ramous wasn't aware of that, but figured the man might be important to the General.

Once they got to the border, the driver and Ramous walked to the gate. At which time, the important man told the Lebanese guards to allow them passage. Once through the first gate, they were stopped by Israeli guards with guns aimed at them. Ramous shouted for the soldiers in the back to reveal themselves. Once the soldiers were revealed, they allowed them through. They headed straight for the dinner. They were, after all, the Guests of Honor. On the way there, everyone overheard Ramous say, "Mark! I plan to kick your butt when we get back to Madrid!"

They arrived at the dinner, and Ramous sent one of the young soldiers in to fetch the General. He came out to find Ramous holding the important stiff man by the scruff of the neck. It was Hassan Gafa, one of the Lebanese army's best interrogators, and wanted by the Israeli government. The next day the story got around how the American superman took out a whole compound of enemy soldiers. There were at least sixty-three military personnel in the compound. They said he left everyone alive.

In the meantime, Ramous came down with a horrible headache as his mind was flooded with memories. He recalled the moment before the accident on I-5. Afterward, things went black. He woke up in a pool of water, looking up at doctors in white suits, praying over him. While in the water, he dreamed of training in every type of combat. It seemed the dreams lasted a lifetime. Often, he dreamed of his parents, of his friends. He was led to believe he worked for an individual other than the police station. He was a security guard. Then, everything went black, and he woke up in a convalescent home. From there, his memories were different, more real.

He declined to assault Mark because of his headache, "I'm not going to murder you today, Mark, but once this headache is gone, we'll have a discussion, and you can tell me how you knew that phrase. I know what it means."

Even though the timing was impeccable and weird, Mark wondered if there was a phrase to put Ramous back to just an ordinary human being.

Aaron prepared the plane for the return flight to Madrid. Once in the air, Ramous asked if he could fly. It had been so long.

“Guess what Mark, Zoe doesn’t have to teach me how to fly now,” he said as the plane went into a nosedive.

He recovered and said, “I guess I’m rusty. What’s Zoe going to say, Mark? I hope she doesn’t leave me.”

“She will not leave you; we found out only two days ago. Truman found out about you when he left Egypt. Canon had files on you. So, we have only known since the day before yesterday.”

“Wow, does God have good timing or what?”

Mark said, “Zoe was standing at the door when Truman told me. We didn’t know she was there. She was waiting for the right time. I have no clue when she planned to do so, but I guess I spoiled it for her. Don’t you hold this against her.”

Mark explained everything he learned about Ramous and what St. Paul did to him and why. He was one of a kind and the most advanced Gen in the world.

Ramous’ headache wouldn’t go away. Despite that, he called Zoe and told her what happened. The news had already reached the Group in Madrid. Everyone asked who could have performed such a deed?

Zoe worried about Ramous and hoped it wouldn't change him. She was concerned he might leave her. When they landed, only a few Gens greeted them. Most of the Gens already moved on. Ramous put his arm around Zoe and she walked him to a coach so he could lie down.

She was afraid, "What now, Ram? Are you going to leave me for some great adventure?"

"No matter what, Hon, I'll never leave you. This changes nothing between us. We are just more alike than we first imagined."

Ramous and Zoe got up early the next morning and left for Tuscany. They spent the first day walking and talking about Ramous' condition. He didn't want to talk about it anymore.

He said, "Let's enjoy ourselves, Hon."

There was no discussion about it for the rest of the week. Ramous let it go as if nothing had ever happened. Remarkably, he acted his old self. The resort was quiet and the only Gens left at the vineyard was Matthew, the Third Gen doctor, and three assistants. The week was like the honeymoon they never got, and it strengthened their relationship considerably.

Home

When Ramous and Zoe returned from Madrid, they were met by Truman, who asked them to join him at the Blue house for lunch.

When they arrived, Mark and Dee were waiting for them. They had prepared lunch for the group, toasted cheese sandwiches and tomato soup.

Truman said, “Have a seat guys, and I will finish the story I started last week. Mark tells me, Ram, he filled you in on what happened, and what St. Paul did to you.”

“Yes, he told me. Is there more?”

“Yes, I didn’t tell Mark everything, because I wanted to tell you firsthand. St. Paul put you back out on the street as a research project. They were testing a new Neurostimulation process. Their new process allowed them to manipulate your memories. The hypothesis was they could erase your memories and give you new ones. The US government was especially interested in this research because they could capture foreign leaders, or even spies, and make them believe they were working for the US, undercover. Can you imagine the advantage it could give

the United States if they knew everything a foreign country was planning? Pollen was heading the project from Canada.”

Ramous said, “Based on what Mark told me, that was obvious. Honestly, I could see the US government doing that, and I’d be okay with it, but not on American citizens, not on me!”

“I understand your anger, Ram. I’m sorry.”

No one said anything for a couple minutes.

“Ram, as I told Mark, Pollen’s son was in a head-on auto accident with you on I-5 just north of Olympia, Washington, and it killed the both of you.”

“You know when Mark activated me, If I can call it that. All I saw was a pair of headlights coming at me. Then I came to in that Lebanese jail.”

Mark answered, “Right after I said that phrase, you had this blank look on your face for just a moment. Two seconds later all the guards were on the floor and you were out the door. I’m sorry too, Ram.”

“Thanks, me too.”

Truman continued, “You know, Pollen told St. Paul to retrieve his son before they processed him at the morgue.

He wanted to save his son, not you, by making him the first Fifth Gen. Someone working for St. Paul messed up by putting you into that body rather than his son. When Pollen found out, he wanted you dead, but the CIA stepped in and told Pollen to turn you into a Sixth Gen. It was the CIA that had you turned in to as Sixth, not Pollen. I don't know if that's good or bad, because it was the difference between living as a Sixth Gen or death. I guess that's for you to decide."

"Well, I will always choose life, but either way, I wasn't given a decision. So, it is, what it is."

"Right. I think I can say we're all grateful you're alive."

Mark said, "Remember the conversation we had at the second hanger, about you feeling a bit useless?"

"Yes, I do. What a strange turn of events, eh?"

"In deed!"

Truman continued, "The CIAs only purpose was to test the new method of Neurostimulation, by first giving you the skills intended for the future Sixth Gens. According to the files, they put you through the most rigorous training.

You were out of it the whole time, but you were learning skills. Apparently, you showed those skills in Lebanon.”

Ramous answered, “You know, that was very easy to take that whole base out. It was like I could move ten times faster than anyone else. I could tell every move anyone in that compound planned to make. My head still spins when I think of it.”

“Again, according to the files, that’s what the subliminal training was all about. Also, I’m personally curious what you remember about those two years. Did you remember being a security guard for Pollen?”

“Now that you mention it, I do. I didn’t like him. He wanted me to kill his ex-wife, and I refused to do it. I blacked out soon afterward and woke up in the convalescent home.”

“Ram, I’d like to mention that six Third Gens gave their lives trying to protect you. Pollen had them killed when they refused to kill you. Do you remember anything about them?”

“No. I don’t even know their names. Now, I’m really sad about that.”

“The six that replaced them also, covertly protected you as well. I can’t say enough good things about them.”

Zoe said, “Matthew is such a good example of kindness. I agree whole heartedly, Truman.”

“When Pollen put you under the second time, it was at the direction of the CIA. They wanted to test the new process to see if they could restore your old memories and life. Next, the files say they placed you in a convalescent home, and had them wake you up.”

The memories were coming so fast they made Ramous sick. His stomach growled, “I need something to drink or eat. I need to go to the bathroom.”

He ran to the bathroom to throw up. Fifteen minutes later, he returned to the porch where Zoe gave him half a cheese sandwich and a glass of orange juice.

Truman asked, “Are you feeling better, Ram?”

“Much better, I guess I’m good to go for another ten minutes.”

“Ramous, you were the first test subject of the new Neurostimulation process. Once you left the convalescent home, it only took you a month for you to recover from the coma. Truth is, you were never ill. Your recovery was only

part of the process to normalize your life. Once you were back, and life was normal, and you were back with Portland Police, St. Paul only needed to do regular checkups on you. The doctors you were seeing in Portland were both Third Gens. Ram, we found those two Gens in Canada.”

“After thinking about all those trips to Portland to see the doctors, I realized that it was automatic. It was like I had no choice but to go. That was until the time I missed because we found Daniels on the beach. Otherwise, I never missed an appointment. They really did a number on me.”

“That’s not all. The last Third Gen to process you put a failsafe in your head. He put in a subliminal command, in Swahili, to return your memories to you, all of them. That command was ‘Attention, take the diapers off’. I found a separate letter explaining all of that. It said, Pollen always used that term when he came to review your progress. I figured it out and told Mark, and because of that, you saved a number of young Israeli soldiers, Mark, and yourself. There’s no reversing it. Now that you have been triggered, the phrase will have no meaning. I’m sure, you already know most of this, and figured the rest of it out for yourself.”

“Zoe and I decided not to talk about it while we were in Tuscany. I really didn’t have a problem putting it out of my mind. So, I don’t know everything, nor did I spend any time trying to figure it out, although since you have been explaining all of this, many things have come to mind, things that make sense to me, or remind me of the two years I was someone else.”

“Okay. There are more troubling issues than what they did to you. This is where I explain just how evil those involved with the Angel Project really were. Pollen died of a heart attack soon after they released you. He was out taking a walk on his property when he died, and they didn’t find him for a week. It was too late to save him. They sent in Canon to recover all of Pollen’s files. He was asked by the CIA, who was monitoring Pollen’s progress, to test you and see if you weren’t working undercover for Pollen. It’s not clear in the files why they thought you were, but they did. So, they directed the Seattle labs to send a Fourth Gen to San Diego. The files said they put the experiment in Portland for two nights because San Diego was not ready for the transfer. There were two people in Portland St. Paul wanted to influence, by the names of Jill Avery and Thomas Minor. Mr. Minor often complained about his research projects. Jill Avery and he were close friends. It

was clear the two would cause problems for the corporation at some point in the future. St. Paul was concerned and watched them for a couple years. St. Paul often observed employees for short periods of time, so they could determine their loyalty to the company. They told John Harrison, who was Minor's immediate supervisor, to take three days' leave. Then St. Paul caused a situation where both Avery and Minor had to search for Harrison. In doing so, they directed them to a particular lab, where the two found the research subjects. They became the vessels used to get to you and complete their research. St. Paul already determined neither one could ignore what they saw in the lab. They expected them to take the information left for them on the desk, with the intention of exposing St. Paul, but they broke into the safe and took secret company information, which was unexpected. Foolishly, a St. Paul manager sent sensitive, top-secret, files along with the ones they hoped the two would take. The main archives of St. Paul were kept in San Diego. So, a manager by the name of Harold Stevens sent those sensitive files with the experiment. Afterward, he was fired for his careless act. After Minor and Avery retrieved the files, St. Paul expected Minor to end up with the files, and he did. Once Minor was solely in control of the files, Canon assigned Sawyer to kill

the Avery family. Sawyer sent the First Gens to kill her and her family, acting on the orders of Congressman Canon, hoping it drove Minor to run. There was a high probability he would run to the coast. They planned to kill him there, bringing you into the picture.”

“How did Peter end up in the middle of this? You know he’s getting married to my hotel manager. Do you think they’re in danger?”

“No, I don’t think so. This is how he became involved. St. Paul already knew of Peter Daniels and knew he was Minor’s best friend. They also knew both spent a lot of time on the coast. What they didn’t expect was Minor to turn the files over to Daniels, but it didn’t matter because Daniels also ran for the coast. Everything was falling into place, and Canon described it like putting a mouse in a maze. That’s when everything took a left turn. Mark’s replacement, Terry Hatfield, got wind that the First Gens were killing people and looking for others on the coast. He was told the First Gens were looking for a group of women on a list, so he sent in the Second Gens to stop them. That was not supposed to happen. He also thought the First Gens, Dania in particular, went full schizophrenic. Canon knew Zoe intercepted the First Gen, who was supposed to kill Daniels and killed him herself. Of course, we know she

didn't do that, but Canon didn't know that. So, I think they're safe. Anyway, St. Paul expected the First Gen to leave evidence behind. I guess it was a stroke of luck for St. Paul that Zoe missed the thumb drive in the blue-ray player. It was going according to plan, although so many potential errors ended up working for St. Paul."

Zoe asked, "How did Canon or anyone with St. Paul know I left the thumb drive in the blue-ray?"

"Word of the video on that file was well known. His files mentioned several officers were at the scene and knew about it. Canon said St. Paul had a CIA operative, who was following Daniels on the scene too, and gave that information to Sawyer, who intern told Canon."

"Canon told Sawyer he wanted those officers killed, the two who responded to the death of Daniels. There's nothing in the files to indicate that he told Dania to do it, that's just common sense. Dania wasn't the only First Gen sent to the coast. Several were sent, and this is why. They expected that murdering your friends would trigger you, causing you to have a total recall and act as the Sixth Gen you were programmed to be. They hoped you would take out all the First Gens, but their actions didn't trigger

you. Instead, and no offense Ram, the file said, the idiot fell in love with a Gen instead.”

Ramous responded, “Idiot, eh?”

“According to Canon, when you turned those files over to the US Attorney General, St. Paul’s Angel Project would come to an end. He said a lot of individuals would be serving long prison sentences. Canon saw what was coming and fled the country before they could arrest him and took with him the files we have now.”

Ramous said, “Are we still rats in a maze?”

After the meeting, Ramous approached Truman. “I want to go to Egypt. I knew someone higher than Sawyer had my friends killed. I need to verify Canon is dead, and I need to do it for myself.”

Truman agreed and said he’d put a team together to go with him.

There was a Second Gen by the name of Jared, who conducted several operations for the CIA in Egypt. They asked him to join the team because of his Middle Eastern contacts, and he knew his way around Egypt. He agreed to join them. Another three Gens went for added security.

The next evening six Gens flew out from Madrid and landed in Cairo. Jared found a contact who offered to give them a place to sleep for the night. He asked his contact to check if they could find anything out about the Congressman.

If the Jihadists killed him, they would brag about doing so. There were no rumors, so they assumed he was still alive. Late the next morning, one of Jared's contacts told him about an American being held, or rather living in a compound in Ammon Jordan.

The contact came to the home they were staying at an hour later. He brought with him one man who chased Canon. He explained they were planning to kill him, until one man in the truck, a Jordanian, told them Jordan might pay a ransom for him, because he was an American official. The Jordanians paid for Canon, hoping to use him to get into the good graces of the Americans. It could mean donations for the country.

Truman laughed, "Those idiots, they don't know what they have. It's going to turn into a fight between them and the US, who will want them to turn him over as a wanted criminal. The US won't do or pay anything for him

because it won't be beneficial for them. How much money did they pay you for the Congressman?"

"Fifty thousand American dollars."

Truman said, "Wow. For that, they might kill him instead of giving him up. Next to Iran, Jordan is one of the worse countries to negotiate with."

Ramous looked over the group and said, "I guess we're going to Jordan."

Truman answered, "I guess so. If we're driving, we should leave around 10 PM tonight. That should put us in Ammon at 5 AM."

Jared spoke up, "I have had to escape through Jordan several times. I have good contacts there too, but I don't have the numbers with me. My girlfriend, Beth, can get them for me. I'll call her and have her get them."

Jared called Beth, who retrieved all his Jordanian numbers and gave them to him, "I love you too, Honey," he said as he hung up.

Everyone in the room stared at him.

He responded, "Is there a problem, guys?"

Truman answered, "Not at all, Honey."

Jared proved to be an important asset to the mission. He contacted a friend of his in Ammon, who knew where they were keeping the Congressman. He told Jared the guy was a pain in the butt, and everyone wished they would just turn him over to the US, but the government wasn't going to, until the US paid them a large sum of money. No one in Washington wanted him that badly.

The friend asked Jared for his cell number and said he needed to call him back. Twenty minutes after he hung up, the friend called back.

The man on the phone said, "My good friend, Jared."

That was suspicious.

He continued, "I have a deal for you. If you will pay one hundred thousand dollars, you can fly into Ammon, and we will deliver the American creep to you. Do you want to do that? Can you do that?"

"One moment, Rashid, let me ask my friends."

The team agreed to pay the ransom, and it was easier to fly in rather than drive in.

Jared answered, "Yes, we will pay the money and meet you at the airport. Let me warn you, I'm with some

nasty guys who wouldn't be happy if they're double-crossed. I heard about your cousin, Faroug, who tried to double-cross my friends, the Israelis. Do you know where he's now? Let me tell you. He's in a place where you would have to stop and search for pieces of him to pray for him rather than shake his hand, understand friend?"

"I would never double cross you, Jared. You know how many times I have helped you out?"

"We will arrive in a blue and white Gulf Stream III. We want to land at 4 AM tomorrow morning. Can you have him there?"

"Yes, we'll be there. I'll see you then, and don't forget one hundred thousand American dollars," he said and hung up.

The team, after withdrawing the money from a Cairo bank, spent the rest of the day sightseeing. Ramous had never been to Egypt, and Jared wanted to show him around.

It will only take an hour from takeoff to landing at Ammon. They got to the plane at 2 AM, did the preflight and reported the flight plan. They set the plane down in Ammon at 3:45 AM, where they found Rashid and six other Jordanians standing on the tarmac.

Jared laughed. “That fat guy standing with them is the manager for the airport. His name is Oday, and he has helped me in the past.”

Truman handed Jared the money and told him to handle the transaction. When they met the group on the tarmac, they realized Canon was not with them.

Jared asked, “Where’s the Congressman?”

Rashid answered, “Where’s the money?”

Jared set the briefcase on the ground and opened it to show the cash. Oday, the airport manager counted it.

“It’s all here.”

Next, three men stepped out from behind several wooden crates. In the middle of them was Congressman Canon. He was handcuffed and looking scared.

“Thank you, Rashid,” Jared said as he handed them another briefcase. It contained another one hundred thousand dollars.

And then he said, “When you’re a friend of mine, I’ll take care of you,”

They thanked the team profusely as they got back into the plane. Just as they closed the hatch, blue flashing lights came out from everywhere.

Jared yelled, "Get out of here!"

Truman didn't even radio the tower. He put the throttle to fast takeoff.

Ramous sat across from Canon. "You're going to pay for the death of my friends.

Then he said, "Mr. Mark Canon, you're under arrest for the murder of Jill Avery, Harold Avery, their daughters Sara, and Tami Avery, Thomas Minor, Cindy Halstead, my friend Paul Hawk and my friend John Wilson. You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. Do you understand your rights, Congressman?"

Canon said nothing. He only stared at him.

When they got back to Madrid, they put Canon in a metal cage they found in the new hanger. They hadn't decided what to do with him yet. That night Ramous and Zoe took an airbus and Congressman Canon. Mark tried to contact them on the radio, but they never answered.

Ramous left a note behind that said, "I did what I came to do, until we meet again, my friends."

The next evening, they landed at PDX.

Ramous radioed ahead, telling them to have police officers there on arrival.

Ramous and Zoe exited the plane, along with Canon.

Fortunately, Ramous knew most of the police officers waiting for them. He explained that Congressman Canon was wanted by the US government and was being charged with ordering the murders of at least eight people in Oregon. Before he took Canon, he went through Truman's files and found all the evidence he needed to charge Canon with the murders in Oregon.

He handed those files over to a detective who was standing there looking important. The detective said, "Thank you, Ramous. I heard you were dead. Good to see you, Sir."

The police carted Canon off to jail, and as Ramous stood there, his arm around Zoe, she turned to him and said, "Don't you find it interesting Canon didn't say anything the whole way here?"

"Yes. He hasn't said anything since we picked him up in Jordan. I expected him to negotiate for his release, but he was silent the whole way. Honestly, I don't care if he

sang the national anthem the whole way. It doesn't matter. I accomplish what I set out to do."

"Right, what do you want to do now? Do you want to go eat breakfast?"

Ramous looked at her and said, "Right now, I want to go home, Sweetheart. I just want to go home."

After a long afternoon walk on the beach, Ramous, Zoe, Maggie, Hank, and Honey took a seat on the back deck. Emily and Peter joined them as the chef brought dinner. The discussion was about the property in Manzanita. Ramous hoped Hank would build another resort there, and Maggie and he should operate it.

Hank said, "I might be interested in doing that. I could monitor the kids and work at the same time."

He looked at Maggie and said, "We'll give it some thought."

Maggie asked, "Are you going to come back as the Police Chief, Ram?"

"No. I love police work, but Zoe and I haven't made any decisions about what to do with our lives yet. Perhaps, we will travel. We still have a little vineyard in Tuscany we

like. In fact, we're looking for management. Emily, what do you think?"

"I love it here, Ram. I don't want to go back to Europe."

Zoe said, "It's a beautiful place, Emily. You would fall in love with it."

"Thanks, but I'm happy here."

Peter said, "You won't change her mind. We both love it here, and neither one of us speak Italian. How would that work?"

Ramous answered, "Okay, I was just offering, but you should at least go visit with us some time. All of you need to, although I admit, it's good to be home."

As they finished dinner, Emily asked the Chef to send out coffee for everyone.

By then, the sun was low and golden. Zoe mentioned how it was the best time of day.

While they relaxed on the deck drinking coffee, Steven approached the group with his kids. Honey, who loved the kids, barked profusely, and wagged her tail as the kids joined them on the deck. Jennie was five and Robert was four.

Robert jumped in his lap, “Uncle Ram, Daddy tells me you were in Europe for a long time. I was wondering where you went. Maybe, someday you can take me to Mexico with you?”

“Of course, young man, when you’re old enough to travel with me, we’ll go.”

At that moment, Jennie said, “What would we do there, Uncle Ram?”

He paused, “Oh, I guess a little of this and a little of that.”

The End...