AN ENQUIRY INTO HOW EMOTIONS AFFECT
MORAL REASONING:
AN ACADEMIC AND CREATIVE PROJECT

by

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TITLE IN CAPITAL LETTERS
STARTING TWO INCHES FROM TOP MARGIN
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ABSTRACT

This project is a combination of an academic and creative work. It starts by investigating Kohlberg’s work on moral reasoning, his use of moral dilemmas, and his claims of the possibility for using this format as a school curriculum. It progresses to Kohlberg’s critics and advocates using his methods to investigate cross-cultural, gender, and age differences in moral reasoning. Finding little room for further study using Kohlberg’s methods that would solve the problem between hypothetical and real moral reasoning, I turn to creating a novel that ultimately asks what I find to be the most intriguing questions of moral reasoning. The Methodology explains my creative and intellectual process. The Conclusions try to sum up what I learned from the Literature review, the writing of the book, and the changes in my own moral reasoning along the process.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, moral reasoning was considered the domain of religion or philosophy. However, increasingly moral reasoning or character development has become an expected outcome of students’ education (Kohlberg, 1981)). Since moral reasoning has often been seen as relative to culture, this has been a contentious issue in American politics and educational theory. One clear area of dispute has been between those who would wish to see Judeo-Christian values represented in more schools, and secularists who fear the intrusion of these values deny other cultures the same representation. Indeed, recently there have been political battles over whether the theory of intelligent design should be taught in science classes (e.g., Kitzmiller, et al. v. Dover Area School District et al.). Another battle has been over school prayer.

Lawrence Kohlberg proposed a universal theory of moral development that tried to overcome the cultural relativist problem and could also be treated as a method of instruction (Kolberg, 1981). Kohlberg’s dilemma/interview method was meant to stimulate dialectical thinking which Kohlberg felt was essential in moving students to higher levels of moral reasoning. From Kohlberg’s perspective, moral reasoning was about people’s thought processes, not their values, culture, or emotions. Kohlberg repeatedly insisted that according to his theory of moral development,
emotion was not part of moral reasoning nor of moral development, but rather only played a role in deciding whether or not a person would act upon their moral judgment (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; Thomas, 1999). The main contention of the literature review that follows in Chapter Two, which will later be illustrated in *Book of Daniel*, an original work of fiction that will serve as the Contents Chapter of this project, is that emotion cannot be separated from moral judgment nor from any other type of thought. Kohlberg’s view of moral reasoning as a mechanical thought process akin to scientific thought (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984) is most likely the result of the method he and subsequent researchers used to collect data. As I outline in the literature review, this method involved posing moral dilemmas to students who could not feel the consequences of their decisions, nor would they be affected by the emotional context of past experiences because the dilemmas presented tended to be highly abstract. Kohlberg and many other researchers (e.g., Blatt & Kohlberg, 1978; Kohlberg 1984; Snarey, 1985) have presented evidence that they can move students to higher levels of moral reasoning through the dilemma/interview method; the question that remains is whether or not this will adequately prepare students to deal with the emotional side of moral reasoning that they will more likely be faced with in a real world setting.

Two competing theories argue that emotion plays a role in all thought from perception to contemplation to action. The Cannon-Bard Theory (Cannon, 1927) states that emotion precedes understanding and therefore inevitably alters our perception. In this theory, emotion produces physiological changes. The alternative
James-Lange Theory, first proposed in 1884, is that physiological changes cause emotion (James, 1884). For example, “I see a bear, my heart races and muscles tense, then I feel the emotion of fear.” In either case, it is clear that emotion is so intricately linked to thought that even in perceiving a moral question, people’s emotions influence the subsequent moral reasoning.

There is a great deal of evidence that others view emotion as playing a large part in moral reasoning. Our legal system, for example, takes into account a person’s emotional state at the time of a crime and accordingly uses different penalties such as the differences in penalties for first, second, or third degree murder. Others in the academic realm, such as Carol Gilligan, specifically challenged Kohlberg’s theory that emotion was separate from moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan proposed that males and females reason differently, with males paying more attention to questions of justice and females relying more on a sense of caring in their moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1982; Kyte, 1996). If emotion affects moral reasoning, it would therefore seem necessary to pay attention to this fact in proposing a method of moral education.

The goal of this project is to improve upon Kohlberg’s dilemma/interview method by trying to understand how a person’s past experiences provide an emotional background for future moral action. Chapter Two of this project will provide an account of the background of Kohlberg’s theory, the relationship of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, Kohlberg’s research and others’ research using Kohlberg’s theory, an
in-depth look at Kohlberg’s view of emotion as separate from moral reasoning, and alternative theories that incorporate emotion into moral reasoning. Chapter Three will provide an overview of the methodology I followed in writing the fiction work that is the content chapter. Chapter Four, the content chapter, contains a work of fiction that explores how individuals struggle with competing moral imperatives of law, religion, and culture. Chapter Five offers conclusions and implications for future research.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will give a detailed summary of Kohlberg’s Stage Theory of Moral Reasoning. It will explore the similarities between Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Reasoning and Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development, as Kohlberg’s initial studies looked at how moral reasoning changes as children develop. The literature review will also examine: the ways in which emotions affect moral reasoning, specifically looking at Gilligan’s work in examining gender differences in moral reasoning; the degree to which Kohlberg’s theory has been tested across cultures; the ways in which ideologies affect moral reasoning; and any contrary findings that might provide insights to Kohlberg’s Theory.

The Intellectual Background of Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development

Beyond Philosophy and Religion, modern Psychology presents a third epistemology available to study moral development, producing a paradigm that is concerned with understanding moral development through the processes of human thought and reason (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). In his Theory of Moral Development, psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg attempted to answer affirmatively that virtue can be identified and taught, but he defined virtue as a system of reasoning, rather than as a set of beliefs or behaviors.
(Kohlberg, 1981). Thus, Kohlberg stated that the teaching of virtue occurs through
developing of students’ reasoning when applied to ethical questions (Kohlberg,
1981). However, Kohlberg admitted to borrowing from both philosophy and
psychology in order to develop his theory (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). From
philosophy, Kohlberg took the notion that moral reasoning is largely based upon
deliberating questions of justice (Kohlberg, 1981). He therefore developed a series
of moral dilemmas and an interviewing method that stimulated subjects’ reasoning
on questions of justice. From psychology, however, Kohlberg built upon Piaget’s
framework that development occurs initially according to a genetic timetable and
then according to an individual’s genetic heritage and environment (Elkin, 1989;
Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1978; Thomas, 1999). Kohlberg describes this combination
of epistemologies as intending to produce, “… a theory of moral education that
combines (1) a philosophical theory of justice with (2) a psychological theory of the
process of moral development to produce (3) an educational theory prescribing a

While admitting that his theory follows in the tradition of such
philosopher/educators as Plato, Kant, and Dewey, Kohlberg initially approaches the
subject of moral development through empirical psychological studies which
observed the reasoning youths used to solve ethical problems at different stages of
their adolescence (Kohlberg, 1981). For this reason, Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral
Development has much in common with Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development
and the two should be understood in concordance.
The Relationship Between Cognitive Development and Moral Reasoning

Development

Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development builds upon Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development (Kohlberg, 1981). The two theories share the following characteristics: 1) both theories explain development from the epistemological perspective of psychology, using as a basis, empirical studies that explore changes in reasoning that occurs as people age; 2) both Piaget and Kohlberg use stages to order the patterns by which reasoning changes; 3) the process of cognitive and ethical development is at first linked to the physiological development of the mind, but is ultimately a result of an individual’s genetic potential and formative environment; and 4) both theories use a pair of closely aligned dialectical terms to describe the cognitive mechanism that drives development: Piaget’s assimilation and accommodation, Kohlberg’s differentiation and integration (Elkin, 1989; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1978).

Piaget and Kohlberg began to develop their theories by observing children’s reasoning when given mental tasks to complete (Elkin, 1989; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1978). Kohlberg formed his theory by observing people’s reasoning when they were presented with moral dilemmas and, like Piaget, thought that the best way to understand an individual’s development was by understanding changes in reasoning, as subjects aged (Elkin, 1989; Kohlberg, 1981). Universal stages of reasoning were employed, in both theories, to categorize these shifts or changes in reasoning ability. Both theorists found that there was a natural progression in
subjects’ thinking and that the rate of this progression was determined by individuals’ genetic and environmental conditions (Elkin, 1989; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1978; Thomas, 1999). One point of difference between the two theories, however, is that an average person would be expected to reach the highest stage of cognitive development by the late teens (Thomas, 1999), but an average person might never reach Kohlberg’s highest stages. This brings in to question the legitimacy of placing stages of reasoning that are rarely encountered in society as the highest and most preferable stages. In both cognitive and moral reasoning development, it would be logical to maximize the amount of development. Both theorists sought to achieve this by using tasks that bring about conflicts in reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1978).

Another major similarity of the two theories is that development through stages occurs by a universal psychological process of interpreting information and social roles. Piaget said that children at play are often assimilating or using knowledge and experience of the world around them to suit their needs and desires (Elkin, 1989). This exploration is originally completely egocentric, but assimilation is balanced by accommodation, whereby children learn the actions and responsibilities that are required of them (Elkin, 1989). Kohlberg uses the terms differentiation and integration to describe the psychological mechanism that drives moral reasoning development (Kohlberg, 1981). Values are differentiated from each other in terms of importance and then integrated into an increasingly complete and consistent moral system (Kohlberg, 1981). Though differentiation and integration
are different than assimilation and accommodation, the cognitive process in each case has the effect of moving a child’s perception of the world from being egocentric to sociocentric, while at the same time reasoning becomes more autonomous. From society’s point of view, it would be important that as one becomes more autonomous in moral reasoning, one does not regress to hedonistic reasoning. Kohlberg, recognizing this potential problem, nicknames a rare subject in which he finds regressive reasoning, Raskolnikov, after the main character of Dostoyevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (Kohlberg, 1984).

Kohlberg showed that progression through stages of moral reasoning was not only empirically demonstrable, but he also used this process as an argument for what ought to be our goals in a moral reasoning education (Kohlberg, 1981). This argument is teleological in nature because Kohlberg argued that from design we can perceive intent. There are two parts to this argument. The first is that each stage becomes progressively more universal and prescriptive in moral judgments, and more rational and autonomous in reasoning, culminating at Stage 6 or a later postulated Stage 7 (Kohlberg, 1981). The second part of the argument is that moral reasoning, when stimulated through contemplation of ethical question, naturally progresses towards these stated ends (Kohlberg, 1981). In other words, because we can witness the movement towards higher stages of moral reasoning and because there is little evidence of regression, this process ought to happen (Kohlberg, 1971; Kohlberg, 1981). In this sense, just as scientific thinking moves towards objective truth, moral reasoning moves towards ethical truth (Kohlberg, 1981). This is, of
course, a highly contentious claim, but the psychological paradigm that Kohlberg uses to approach this subject at least carries the benefit of being studied in an empirical form (Kohlberg, 1981). This alone makes Kohlberg’s theory quite different from his philosophical antecedents.

*Moral Reasoning and Kohlberg’s Solution to Cultural Relativism*

Two categories of educational theories are social transmission theories and social transformational theories (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). In social transmission theories, society seeks to reproduce a set of knowledge, skills, or beliefs from one generation to the next through an educational system (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). In social transformation theories, students are prepared to critically analyze society and then produce changes politically, economically, or morally (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Kohlberg further breaks down social transformational theories into romantic and progressive education (Kohlberg, 1981). The term romantic refers to the ideas of the Romantic Movement, as exemplified by Rousseau’s educational treatise *Emile* (Durant & Durant, 1963). In this context, goodness or virtue is thought to be innate, and it is the educator’s job to allow students to develop naturally by facilitating curiosity, allowing students to recognize their own mistakes, and protecting students from the corrupting influences of elements such as forced obedience and routine (Kohlberg, 1981). Progressive education, by contrast, follows in the tradition of Dewey and attempts to nurture development (moral and cognitive) by developing cognitive skills used in the obtainment and analysis of information (Kohlberg, 1981). In progressive education,
the teacher challenges students through activities and instruction that bring about
conflicts in students’ thinking (Dewey, 1935; Kohlberg, 1981). Kohlberg explicitly
places himself in the progressive camp, and his dilemma/interview method serves
not only as a tool for measurement of development but also as a method of

Kohlberg noted that considerable conflicts exist between social transmission
or traditional education and progressive education, when dealing with the subject of
moral development (Kohlberg, 1981). One side of this conflict arises because
traditional education in the U.S. has been seen to be oppressive to other cultures by
favoring a Judeo-Christian ethical system and Anglo-American cultural heritage
(Kohlberg, 1981). Multicultural education is a reaction to the perceived hegemony
in cultural transmission (Kohlberg, 1981). In a study of academic literature from
1981 to 1997 argue, five key social and educational beliefs underlying
multiculturalism emerged: 1) multiculturalism can equalize opportunities for
minority learners; 2) increase racial tolerance; 3) develop self-esteem and self-
identity in minority learners; 4) reduce differential academic achievements among
different ethnic groups; 5) lead to social empowerment of all learners, ethnic and
non-ethnic alike (Raptis & Fleming, 1998).

Kohlberg’s theory, therefore, tries to resolve two major problems of this
conflict: 1) because there is a desire to respect other cultures, morality is then seen as
relative to one’s culture; and 2) if morality is indeed relative, then there can not be a
consistent educational goal for moral development (Kohlberg, 1981). Kohlberg’s
solutions to these problems are three fold. He attempts to define a universal system of moral development. In this system, there is a hierarchy of stages that represent not only an empirical progression of reasoning, but also an ethical goal of moral developments students’ moral reasoning develops, it transforms from being reliant upon other authorities to being autonomous (Kohlberg, 1981). A greater degree of explanation of Kohlberg’s theory is now needed.

Kohlberg’s Stage Theory of Moral Development

Kohlberg argues that moral development is a pattern of increasing differentiation of values from each other when they are in competition and then the integration of values into an increasingly consistent system (Kohlberg, 1981). To understand the process by which we do this, he created a six-stage theory to describe the reasoning individuals may use to decide questions of justice. The six stages are grouped into three levels, two in each level, and are as follows:

Pre-conventional level:

Stage 1- Punishment and Obedience Orientation

Stage 2- The Instrumental Relativist Orientation

Conventional or Conformist Level:

Stage 3-The Interpersonal Concordance Orientation

Stage 4- Society Maintaining Orientation

Post-conventional, Autonomous or Principled Level:

Stage 5- The Social Contract or Human Rights Orientation

Stage 6- The Universal Ethical Principle Orientation (Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 17-18)
In *The Philosophy of Moral Reasoning*, Kohlberg gives the following paraphrased explanations of the stages (Kohlberg, 1981). Reasoning at Stage 1 is defined by obedience to authority or rules, without the need for further justification other than to avoid punishment. At Stage 2, an individual seeks to maximize the benefits to one’s self, while minimizing the risks. These two stages are grouped together because at this level, ideas of good or bad are interpreted through the physical consequences of actions rather than any pre-existing concepts of values. By Stage 3, reasoning has shifted to interpreting morality according to social norms. An example is the concept of fidelity to family, social group, or nationality. People at Stage 4 reason according to religious and legal systems, in which there is an “orientation toward authority, fixed rules, and the maintenance of the social order” (p. 18). It is important to note that just because people might consider themselves religious does not mean that their moral reasoning in necessarily at this level, nor did Kohlberg in his various studies find any significant reasoning differences among Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, or atheists (Kohlberg, 1981). Grouping these two stages is the belief in conforming to social expectations and legitimate authorities. In the Autonomous or Principled Level, reasoning seeks to create moral systems based upon rationality rather than authority. At Stage 5, this often takes the form of concepts of human rights. There is an acknowledgement of the relativism of personal values and opinions, but a desire to reach consensus based upon a critical examination of social utility. In Stage 6, reasoning seeks to define universal,
reversible, and prescriptive principles, such as don’t kill or don’t lie (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984; Thomas, 1999).

There are four factors that go into determining the level of reasoning a person may reach (Thomas, 1999). The first factor is determined by an individual’s genetic potential for development (Thomas, 1999). This factor is closely linked to Piaget’s theory of cognitive development in that, as people develop along a genetic timetable from concrete to abstract thinking, a widening range of reasoning options are available to them (Thomas, 1999). Stages 1 and 2 are, for example, often found in younger children who have not reached the cognitive stage of abstract thinking (Thomas, 1999). The second factor is the motivation a person has in deciding a moral question (Thomas, 1999). One question that this project asks is: How does motivation differ from emotion in terms of affecting moral reasoning? The hypothesized answer is that this motivation factor is emotion and, thus, it is confusing when Kohlberg tries to claim that emotion plays a motivational role only in determining whether someone will act upon their moral decision, rather than viewing emotion as a determining factor in moral reasoning. The third variable is the opportunities an individual has to learn social roles, and the fourth factor is the forms of justice that are familiar to an individual (Thomas, 1999).

Kohlberg argues that the stages of moral reasoning are universal and examples of reasoning at every stage can be found in individuals’ from all cultures (Kohlberg, 1981). However, Kohlberg admits that in some cultures, people may progress faster and farther, with greater frequency than in other cultures (Kohlberg,
While specific beliefs might differ (e.g., don’t curse, if and when it is acceptable to lie, etc.), what does not differ, in as far as they exist in all cultures, are the concepts of equality and reciprocity that guide these beliefs (Kohlberg, 1981). Kohlberg (1981) also claims that moral development is one-directional. He states, “In our stages, all movement is forward in sequence and does not skip stages” (p.20). In relation to the previous two claims, Kohlberg argues that the direction and sequence through these stages is an innate logical progression. “Moral thought, then, seems to act like all other kinds of thought. Progress through moral levels and stages is characterized by increasing differentiation and increasing integration, and hence, the same kind of progress that scientific theory represents” (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 26).

If this statement is correct, it would mean that the hierarchical order of Kohlberg’s stages is not merely based on cultural preferences, but rather it is an objective statement about a universal psychological mechanism. From this perspective, Kohlberg can argue that applying a method of stimulating this universal psychological mechanism would not be oppressive to any culture (Kohlberg, 1981).

The Methodology of Kohlberg’s Theory and Empirical Data Collection

To collect empirical evidence for his theory, Kohlberg devised a set of nine dilemmas, constructed so as to bring ethical principles in competition with one another (Kohlberg, 1981). A subject would read the dilemma, and then an interviewer would ask a series of questions that elicited ethical prescriptions for the dilemma and variations of it. An example is the Heinz Dilemma, which is worth relating here in the form Kohlberg originally used, for the reason that this literature
review will consider the validity and reliability of the dilemma/interview methodology in detail.

In Europe, a woman was near death from a very bad disease, a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what he drug cost to make. He paid $200 for the radium and charged $2000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman’s husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could get together only about $1000, which was half of what it cost. We told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, “No, I discovered the drug and I’m going to make money from it.”

Heinz got desperate and broke into the man’s store to steal the drug for his wife. (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 12)

After reading this dilemma, a series a questions would then be asked to the subject about whether Heinz was right to steal the drug and whether he would be right to do so under different hypothetical situations (Kohlberg, 1981). Often as many as fourteen questions, plus sub-questions were asked, and these questions included meta-ethical questions, which Kohlberg suggested would be more likely to produce changes in reasoning since students would be directed towards evaluating their own moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984). In order to standardize the interview protocol, an extensive manual was created (Colby & Kohlberg, 1985).
As an example of how responses to the Heinz dilemma might be interpreted and categorized into stages, Kohlberg gave the following definitions of the value of life, drawn from a longitudinal study, summarized from the responses of a participant who had passed through all stages:

Stage 1- “There is no differentiation between the moral value of life and its physical or social status.”

Stage 2- “Value of a human life is seen as instrumental to satisfaction of its possessors or others.”

Stage 3- “Value of human life is based on empathy and affection of family and others towards its possessor.”

Stage 4- “Life is conceived as sacred in terms of its place in a categorical moral or religious order of rights and duties.”

Stage 5- “Life valued both in terms of its relation to community welfare and in terms of being a universal human right.”

Stage 6- “Life is valued as sacred because of the universal principle of respect for the individual.” (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 118-120)

Others have examined this methodology in various ways. In reviewing all cross-cultural studies using Kohlberg’s methodology, Edwards (1986) asked the following questions:

1) Is the dilemma method a valid way of eliciting moral judgments of people of other cultures?; 2) Is the standard scoring system appropriate and valid in cross-cultural studies; 3) Is this cognitive development theory useful for

Two types of problems with the scoring of the data emerged: 1) data that were scored at one stage, but really represented reasoning of another stage because reasoning was hidden or not familiar to the researcher; and 2) data that did not seem to match the criteria of any of the stages (Edwards, 1986). In examination of Edwards’ third question, studies showed that both Kohlberg’s stages and the one-directional sequence of development were well-evidenced, though the universal invariance of Kohlberg’s theory was not conclusively proven. Also, there was infrequent evidence of stage regression (Edwards, 1986). Finally, Edwards notes that two types of cultures remain to be studied: hunter-gathering societies and non-capitalistic based nation-states. This is a significant omission as the Heinz dilemma, would be rendered useless in an egalitarian society where there is no concept of private property.

One aspect of Kohlberg’s dilemma/interview methodology that Edwards did not discuss is how the actual dilemma and the questions asked by the interviewer affects the subjects’ moral reasoning. Appendix B of Kohlberg’s *Psychology of Moral Reasoning* lists the traditional nine dilemmas, each followed by 11 probing questions and the further sub-question – why or why not? These questions could very well facilitate the development of students to higher stages of moral reasoning. In fact, they are intended to do so and have the dilemma/interview method has been
employed as an educational as well as a diagnostic tool (Blatt & Kohlberg, 1978; Kohlberg, 1981).

The Empirical Basis For Kohlberg’s Theory and Conflicting Findings

One of the cross-cultural studies that Kohlberg used to form his theory was a longitudinal study of urban middle-class youths in the U.S., Taiwan, and Mexico, and youths of two rural villages in Turkey and the Yucatan (Kohlberg, 1968). Longitudinal studies are an important basis for this theory because they attempt to look at the same subjects as they age. In this study, Kohlberg showed that progression through the stages was consistently one-directional with students scoring at higher stages as they aged (Kohlberg, 1968). There were examples of individuals reasoning at all stages in all of the cultures identified in the study, though urban youths scored higher than rural youths of the same age (Kohlberg, 1968). In all cultures studied, there was a much smaller percentage of the population reasoning at stages 5 and 6 than at lower stages, but when scores were graphed, one might hypothesize that these stages would be reached by more students if the study was extended (Kohlberg, 1968).

Other studies reaffirm the conclusion that a universal sequence through Kohlberg’s stages is an observable psychological pattern rather than a representation of Western cultural preferences. Such is the case with another longitudinal study involved Turkish youths from urban and rural settings between the years 1964-1976 (Turiel, Edwards & Kohlberg, 1978). Again, while urban participants moved faster through stages and had, on average, higher Mean Moral Maturity Scores, both
groups demonstrated the same pattern of development (Turiel, Edwards & Kohlberg, 1978).

Since the development of Kohlberg’s Theory, dozens of studies have employed the dilemma/interview methodology to test the cross-cultural applicability of this theory, and some research has looked at these patterns of development more broadly by comparing cross-cultural studies (Snarey, 1985). One frequently cited study (Snarey, 1985) is a comprehensive review of 68 studies published between 1963-1984, that used Kohlberg’s dilemma/interview method to collect data and score subjects according to reasoning stages. From these data, the universal nature of the sequence of development through Kohlberg’s stages appears to be well substantiated as a general but not absolute pattern (Snarey, 1985). Snarey notes, however, that reasoning at Stage 6 was rarely encountered, though the other stages (especially 1-4) appear in almost every culture. Snarey draws attention to the fact that the U.S. populations did not rank first in the mean moral maturity in any of the five age divisions, thus rebuffing the criticism that Kohlberg’s theory is ethnocentric in conception (Snarey, 1985). Snarey notes that subjects from traditional folk settings never scored at Stages 5 or 6, and some younger groups scored higher than older groups, showing that culture does have some affect on moral development (Snarey, 1985).

More recent studies have continued with conflicting results concerning the cross-cultural applicability of Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. A study of 208 Amsterdam youths, aged 14 to 19 years, from Dutch, Surinamese, Moroccan,
and Turkish ethnicities found significant differences in the Mean Moral Maturity Scores amongst the populations, with ethnicity having the strongest correlation, irrespective of sex or school-type (De May, Baartman, & Schulze, 1999). Age also appeared to have an effect, but the authors suggest that the correlation here was between the age that a member of an ethnic group emigrated to the Netherlands (De May, Baartman, & Schulze, 1999). No differences were found between the Dutch and members of minority ethnic groups that were born in the Netherlands (De May, Baartman, & Schulze, 1999).

A study of 97 4th and 5th grade students from Mexico and the U.S. found no quantitative differences between the two populations, but in qualitative analysis, the authors found differences in the suggestions that students gave to solve a particular problem that specifically dealt with trust students had in police in the two countries (Hass & Hinke, 1997). A study of South African White and non-White adolescents found evidence against the cultural universality of sequence in Kohlberg’s theory (Ferns & Thom, 2001). In this study, White South Africans developed according to Kohlberg’s asserted sequence, many moving from Stage 2 to Stage 5 during the course of the study, not skipping any stages (Ferns & Thom, 2001). Black South Africans, by contrast, developed directly from Stage 2 to Stage 4, but did not continue developing during adolescence. It was hypothesized that the history of apartheid may have been partially responsible for this result (Ferns & Thom, 2001). Problems have also occurred scoring the data within the framework of Kohlberg’s stages. A study of 128 Korean and British adolescents found that Korean children
would often give responses that were could not be scored according to Kohlberg’s stages (Baek, 2002).

**Cultural Ideology, Emotions, and Moral Reasoning**

Cultural ideology differs from culture in that many ideologies may exist within a particular culture and even in a small community. A study of U.S. church-going and secular participants found that cultural ideology was a powerful predictor of moral reasoning (Rest & Thoma, 1999). Cultural ideology was found to strongly influence the moral reasoning of Indian and American children and adults, but in qualitative ways not adequately addressed by stage scoring (Bersoff & Miller, 1992). This study argues found that Indian participants were more likely to reason according to interpersonal expectations, and Americans participants were more likely to reason according to concepts of justice (Bersoff & Miller 1992). One study sought to determine whether different dilemmas might be processed by different parts of the brain, specifically the sections of the brain thought to be responsible for emotion (Greene, et. al., 2001). In this study, subjects were given two dilemmas that had been separated into the categories of personal and impersonal and were observed with an MRI (a machine that indicates brain-activity through increased blood-flow) while they were asked a set of questions about the dilemmas. When given the personal dilemma, the regions of the brain known to be associated with emotion were more stimulated than when posed impersonal dilemmas, at statistically significant levels (Greene, et. al., 2001). Also, areas of the brain associated with
working memory were less active during emotional processes than during cognitive processes (as measured by lobe activity) (Greene, et. al., 2001).

The Relationship Between Moral Reasoning and Moral Action

The relationship between moral reasoning and moral action is of educational importance. In order to advocate for an educational application of Kohlberg’s theory, some relationship between moral reasoning and moral action must be established. While this relationship need not be predictive, it is important from an educational point of view that students that reason according to higher stages should also behave in a more morally desirable way. Not surprisingly, this relationship is not only difficult to establish, but such studies are fraught with ethical concerns.

In one study of incarcerated inmates, prisoners were interviewed using the traditional dilemmas and dilemmas that involved prison situations (Kohlberg, Scharf, & Hickey, 1972). The results showed that prisoners consistently reasoned at lower stages in response to the prison dilemmas than they did with traditional dilemmas (Kohlberg, Scharf, & Hickey, 1972). It was hypothesized that during a study interview, subjects’ reasoning, when presented with traditional dilemmas, is at the highest possible stage, while more personal dilemmas might elicit more practical judgments (Bartek, Krebs, & Taylor, 1993). The controversy over whether people argue at the highest available stage led to the creation of a Moral Judgment Interview which assesses the highest reasoning stage available to a subject and argued that people usually act at the highest level available to them (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987).
The Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) was used to assess whether juvenile delinquents, who acknowledged engaging in prostitution, reasoned lower on prostitution-based dilemmas than traditional dilemmas (Bartek, Krebs, & Taylor, 1993). There was also a control group of non-juvenile defendants that were asked the same dilemmas. Significantly, the delinquent group in this study scored lower on both the MJI and the prostitution scenarios than the non-delinquent group (Bartek, Krebs, & Taylor, 1993). It is claimed that this reinforces evidence from the other studies, that while the MJI does assess moral competence, “people frequently perform below their level of competence” (Bartek, Krebs, & Taylor, 1993, p.66).

Some studies have even more controversial methodologies. For example, in one study a group of college students were given two different dilemmas, one traditional and one that involved a dilemma of whether to conceal or hide the defects of merchandise when selling it, whereby a financial incentive was given if the subject chose to conceal the defect of the merchandise (Carpendale & Krebs, 1995). The results found that people scored lower on the selling dilemma than on Kohlberg’s test, and the monetary incentive seems to have affected moral choices (Carpendale & Krebs, 1995). It was also found that subjects who scored at lower levels on Kohlberg’s test were more likely to conceal the merchandise defects in the selling dilemma and, conversely, subjects that scored higher on Kohlberg’s test were more likely to disclose merchandise defects (Carpendale & Krebs, 1995). These results imply that the claim that people tend to reason at their highest level of
competence, can not be substantiated, but, nevertheless, moral stage reasoning is somehow correlated with moral action.

In both of these studies, the type of dilemma had a statistically significant effect upon the reasoning used to answer the dilemma. Also, groups associated with less moral behavior (at least from a legal perspective) were found to reason at lower stages, and this effect was exacerbated when prisoners were made to reason through prison dilemmas, and prostitutes were made to reason through prostitution dilemmas (Bartek, Krebs, & Taylor 1993; Kohlberg, Scharf, & Hickey, 1972). What is not known is whether these practical judgments were more or less emotional in nature because this was not part of the paradigm used to study reasoning in these studies. The following theoretical model does incorporate emotion as an aspect of reasoning.

Carol Gilligan: Gender Differences in Reasoning

Carol Gilligan proposed that men and women’s moral reasoning operate according to different perspectives: men more according to concepts of justice and women more according to concepts of care (Gilligan, 1982; Kyte, 1996). These perspectives denote preferences not absolute qualities; justice and care operate within each gender’s reasoning (Gilligan, 1982; Kyte, 1996). According to Gilligan, male moral reasoning stresses logic, cost/benefit analysis, or facts, while female reasoning is based more upon emotion, compassion, and interpersonal responsibilities (Gilligan, 1982; Kyte, 1996). Gilligan argued that Kohlberg’s model was biased towards males because the dilemmas revolved around questions of justice (Silberman & Snarey, 1993). Though Gilligan retained Kohlberg’s interview
method in research, the dilemmas posed to subjects were much more personal, such as a question about whether one should have an abortion (Kyte, 1996). Kohlberg disagreed with Gilligan’s assessment that men and women reason differently and he was able to cite that in a collaborative study with Gilligan (Gilligan & Kohlberg, 1971), no significant differences were found between male and female’s reasoning (Kohlberg, 1984). The finding that gender did not affect stage reasoning is supported in other studies (e.g., Hinke & Hass, 1997). On the other hand, in a study of 110 university students, with equal numbers of male and female participants, females were both more likely to score at higher stages of moral reasoning than males, and females were more likely to make care-oriented decisions (Gillian & Krebs, 1996).

Kohlberg agreed that questions of morality encompass far broader topics than issues of justice (Kohlberg, 1984). Likewise, in previous studies reviewed above the affect of emotion upon reasoning, such as in cultural ideology (which is potentially emotionally driven) or the Korean concept of chung, and the benefit of using non-traditional dilemmas and qualitative analysis to explore the complexities of moral reasoning. Whether or not Gilligan is correct in her arguments of gender differences in moral reasoning, her theory illuminates the role of emotion as a motivational factor. Kohlberg argued that emotion is an ego-control that determines if we act morally, not if we reason morally (Kohlberg, 1981, 1984). However, the consideration of the rights and responsibilities one has in a given to ethical question cannot be a purely logical cognitive process. Therefore, a remaining question is: if
emotion does play a role moral reasoning, how are we to incorporate the teaching of positive emotions?

*Moral Reasoning and Education*

The dilemma/interview method that Kohlberg prescribes as an educational method is very similar to the Socratic Method exhibited in the Platonic dialogues. Kohlberg acknowledges that he comes out of this tradition (Kohlberg, 1981), but there have also been modern educational theories akin to what Kohlberg proposed. Like Kohlberg’s dilemma/interview method, values clarification was an attempt to introduce moral education without relying upon a particular set of values or moral system (Dembro, 1994). In values clarification, students are asked to explore and refine their values, and are often challenged with hypothetical contradictory situations. While Kohlberg’s theory looks at the process of reasoning, values clarification looks at the process of valuing (Dembro, 1994). Values clarification, then, considers the emotional process which occurs when one values something as part of the moral reasoning process.

While Kohlberg’s theory has largely been used as research methodology, there have been attempts to implement this theory in an instructional capacity. One method of educational application was called the “Just Community Approach,” implemented at an alternative school within the Cambridge High and Latin School (Leming, 1985). In this approach, Kohlberg’s hypothetical dilemmas were substituted with actual dilemmas facing the school community such as property rights, social integration, attendance, and drug usage (Leming, 1985). Although some
degree of agreement and adherence to these norms was reached in three out of the four ethical subjects listed above, no such agreement could be reached on drug usage (Leming, 1985). The students neither found a need for social norms on this subject, and drug usage at the school remained a problem (Leming, 1985). One possible explanation for this phenomenon is that youths view drug use as involving only themselves (though adult perspectives may differ), therefore if there is an ethical question at hand, it is being forced externally by authority figures with whom the youths do not share the same perspective.

Conflicts may arise when, through a non-authoritarian (autonomous or collectively regulated) system of moral education, the community sending their children to school maintains values and behavioral expectations that are not achieved. Philosophers, theologians, and writers, from Augustine to Dostoyevsky, have asked: If man no longer believes in the authority of religion or laws as a moral basis, what will keep a person from reasoning and acting completely hedonistically (citations)? With the controversies of prayer in school still raging today, there is little question that those concerns are alive today (citation).

This controversy between traditional and progressive educational theory, and by analogy, between social control versus moral freedom, is examined by John Dewey, in his seminal work on educational philosophy, *Experience and Education* (date). Dewey sees progressive education as a reaction to the faults of traditional education (i.e., obedience to authority, behaviorism, intolerance to difference), but
notes that a reaction, even for the admirable desire of physical and intellectual independence, is not a goal in itself. Dewey writes:

The commonest mistake made about freedom is, I think, to identify it with freedom of movement, or with the external or physical side of activity. Now, this external and physical side of activity is different from freedom of thought, desire, and purpose. The limitation that was put upon outward action of the typical traditional schoolroom….put a great restriction upon intellectual and moral freedom…But the fact still remains that an increased measure of freedom of outer movement is a means, not an end…Everything then depends, so far as education is concerned, upon what is done with this added liberty. What end does it serve? (1935, p. 61)

Dewey proposed that progressive education should be aimed at moving students from external control to internal control, for the purpose of directing moral freedom towards a more personally meaningful and socially beneficial end (Dewey 1935). Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, as an applicable education model, seeks to achieve this goal by allowing moral development to be taught without the domination of the educator’s or school system’s values.

The book that follows is an attempt to illustrate the complexities of moral reasoning that cannot be studied in a clinical setting. The characters in these stories deal with dilemmas that involve their emotional pasts, their culture, and the culture that surrounds them. The book deals with many themes found in the research, such as how individuals interact with authority in their moral reasoning and action, the
role culture plays in familiarizing modes of justice, and the competing messages of what constitutes a moral life that abound in American society.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The Methodology chapter will explain some of the reasoning behind the plots and characters in the book. It shows the book’s aspirations to draw the reader into asking questions of faith, philosophies of social and personal responsibility, and the meaning of objective value. The Methodology focuses on the book’s use of moral dilemmas to highlight how emotions interplay with reasoning.

Methodology

This book began through an observation that Lawrence Kohlberg’s Theory of moral development was based upon the dialectic – the process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis – which the dilemmas and subsequent questions were designed to activate within the respondent. However, on several occasions Kohlberg (1981, 1984) specifically claimed his view of moral reasoning to be like scientific thinking, divorced from emotions and values. From my own self-analysis and observations of others, I knew that this could not be true. People make very different decisions based upon their moods, and I personally can attest to changing my mind on a very serious moral matter when reflecting in an angry state or a calmer, more objective state of mind. I have seen this behavior in just about everyone I have ever encountered, and it has always perplexed me as to why Kohlberg (1981, 1984) went to such lengths to view emotions as an output, deciding moral action, rather than equally as an input, deciding moral thought.
Furthermore, the concern for thinking that is divorced from emotions and values has been brought up by a number of existentialist thinkers, such as Dostoyevsky and Camus, as potentially leading toward the type of hedonistic or politically cruel and apathetic thinking as represented in Raskolnikov from *Crime and Punishment* or more realistically the manipulation of Nietzsche’s theories into the horrors of the Nazi death camps. Victor Frankle’s *Man’s Search for Meaning* gives a much better picture of how humans make decisions under duress (in this case of the most extreme kind) as opposed to the antiseptic environment of Kohlberg and other’s data collection methods. The studies that have put people in closer to real-life situations in which emotion was clearly involved, such as the famous *Milgram* experiences, have bordered on the unethical and brought into question how can we genuinely examine people in real moral dilemmas without compromising their mental well-being. It is not that I am suggesting it cannot be done. Long-term qualitative analysis of at-risk youths or detailed juveniles, individuals struggling with drug addiction, teens and adults struggling with major life issues all could provide valuable information about how people truly morally reason. However, the time, access, and Internal Review Boards’ justifiable concern for research subjects make such studies difficult and more suited to a doctoral dissertation.

I began to write the novel that is the content of Chapter Four using the type of dilemmas that Kohlberg used to bring people into cognitive dissidence, situations that illustrate conflicts between people’s personal morality and their duties under U.S. law, but giving them a context or a continuum that showed characters’ past
histories and the ways in which those histories may affect their future thinking. In today’s political and social environment, we can see the moral conflicts people have and the actions of their government to be one of the most profound and life shaping events. At least two of my characters are sent to war by their government with dire consequences for their emotional and thus ethical well-being. In addition, I modeled many of my characters, embellished for literary sake, upon myself and my experiences traveling in many countries and on the people that I met on those journeys. I have used this book also to expose certain injustices I perceived in the world, particularly the use of messages of peace and hope, found in many holy books, disregarded by powerful, or at least vocal, religious leaders who ignore these messages and substitute them with messages of division, intolerance, and hatred. Media pundits likewise rely more on the stimulating of negative emotions than they do in making cogent arguments. The rhetoric of our political leaders does little to resemble the actions they take, and Noam Chomsky’s Failed States (2005) gives well documented illustrations of this point.

Another concern the novel attempts to address is the political tensions within U.S. law and international law. In recent times, we have seen state laws of same-sex marriages being overturned by federal law, the waging of war (without a declaration of war) in Iraq against U.N. security council resolutions, the use of kidnapping and torture by U.S. agencies termed extraordinary rendition, the challenges on Habeus Corpus as illustrated by Hamdi v. Rumsfeld, the current administrations lobbying for holding enemy combatants indefinitely without trial, the desire to replace U.S. courts
with military tribunals for such detainees, and the lobbying before Congress for
tougher interrogation methods which may violate the international covenant under
the Geneva Conventions.

Finally, the novel attempt to illuminate the consolidation of media and
information systems, the loss of objectivity in journalism, and the specific
cooperation between government and media as illustrated in the documentary *Out
Foxed* (2003). My concern about media and information consolidation is that
without accurate information, people are unable to make moral judgments.
Therefore, the novel tries to expose a two-pronged attack on democracy: the
disregard of American and International Law in the pursuit of economic agendas
(Chomsky, 2005) and the manipulation of information so that voters can make moral
decisions as to how their country and its institutions should act.

The novel explores the ways in which we reason and subsequently act
morally: how we treat others, how we treat ourselves, and how we help to shape our
society and its dealings with other societies. It is set in the near future so that the
characters’ pasts, their moral action, and their residual emotional states which affect
future moral decisions give the reader a familiar historical context and perhaps
motivate thinking upon today’s social and political realities.

Literature has consistently been a method of spreading information, rallying
change, and eventually working its way into our educational curriculum. In
determining what greatest effect I might have in producing thinking about moral
reasoning and its applications to current events, I felt that with my background in
English and Philosophy, the greatest educational contribution that I could make was to write a book that exposed readers not only to the pondering of moral dilemmas and of social trends by which they may be affected, but also to elicit responses (with the eventual publication of this book) as to how people perceive these moral dilemmas that are facing our world and to ascertain whether this book has affected their view of the most important topics of our time: altruism, isolation of youth, terrorism, the misinterpretation of religious text to further prejudices, separatism, warfare, the environment, compassion for those who have been wronged by our societies. It documents that hope that through compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, and sacrifice, the horrors of previous generations do not have to be perpetually repeated.

The novel is entitled *The Book of Daniel* poses questions about morality, moral reasoning, the ways emotions affect moral reasoning, and the ways in which real life situations may influence both the emotions and reasoning that go into making moral decisions, judgments, and actions. The following is a description of the main characters. They represent the possibilities of how people may react to the previous set of questions.

*Daniel.*

Daniel represents Faith, Hope, and Love. In particular, he has immediate faith in another character named Rose. He believes in her having a good future, and so he acts with love to show his faith and hope. He shows his love for Rose through giving her help without trying to control her. He believes that through his help Rose
will find her own way. He loves Rose and refuses to give up on her. He is a teacher, and he passes on his teachings both to Rose in the beginning and to another character named Kaba in the end of the story.

_Gavin._

Gavin is purely good hearted but has significant problems of his own. He tries to help people just as Daniel does, but because of his problems, he helps imperfectly. An example of this is how he tries to help the two girls Moonshine and Inspiration. He gives them immediate but imperfect care. He should keep them with him and is willing to take them into his house for as long as they need, but he leaves them for a while because he is worried about Daniel. The girls are gone when he comes back. He is heartbroken because he feels that his help was imperfect and wishes he had done more. Still, it is Gavin who goes to the Philippines with Daniel to help him.

_Rose._

Rose is an abused runaway who seeks help. She finds that help in Daniel. Her recovery is not immediate because suffering such as hers is not gotten over immediately. It needs time, constant care, and someone to have faith and hope in her and to show her love. She recovers, becomes a good and productive person, but most importantly, she does for her sister what Daniel did for her. She tries to help and save her sister Freya with Faith, Hope, and Love.

Luke is the other side of Gavin. He is also good-hearted and wants to change the world, like Gavin wants to help people. Luke is intellect. He thinks about how to change the world, acts to change the world through peace rallies and being an activist, but things do not always work out the way he has planned. That is simply life. A person may try to help people with the best intentions and careful thought, but sometimes there are forces in the world that overcome even these actions.

Isaiah.

Isaiah is a good man who has been damaged by war and the actions he was forced to do that were against his values. He becomes self-destructive, doing wrong to himself and to others. Later, he recognizes his mistakes and tries to amend for them. He may have fathered a child in the Philippines, so he goes to the Philippines to adopt a child. That child is Daniel. Isaiah’s attempt at recognizing his wrong and feeling sorry for them does not paralyze him, but rather makes him act to amend his wrong. He makes other mistakes, such as building up the surveillance system which he later tries to dismantle.

Calvin Johnson.

Calvin is pure judgment. He is the quick fix, the immediate solution without patience, faith, hope, or love. He may want to do right, but he always believes that he has the right answer and is not willing to listen to other alternatives. He could never help Rose because he would judge her, give her a quick prescription for her problems, and would have no patience if she did not heal immediately. It is Calvin
who kills Daniel in the end because he believes that violence, coercion rather than commission, is how to solve problems.

**Boethius.**

Boethius is the opposite side of Isaiah. He too has been harmed by war. Isaiah punishes himself but ultimately forgives himself and tries to make up for his mistakes. Boethius is punished by authority, but he does not heal. Instead, he starts a cult that is anti-authoritarian and corrupt. He preys on young, vulnerable people, but instead of trying to heal them, he uses them for his own self-righteous, greedy purposes.

**Kaba.**

Kaba has been harmed by the world, much like Rose. He also has a choice: whether to help people through coercion (such as violence) or through commission (such as acting with compassion, recognizing his mistakes, and then amending for them. Kaba begins to try to change the world through violence. He struggles with himself, but in the end he accepts that he has done wrong and then will go forth and become Daniel, much like Rose.

**Big John.**

Big John has been wronged and harmed by authority. Unlike Boethius, he stays true to himself and his values, and he continues to help people. It is Big John who helps Daniel subvert authority to track down Kaba, and in the end, he stops the greatest tragedies. There are many people in this world who must break the law.
when the law is wrong in order to make the world a better place. Some examples are Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, and Gandhi.

*Central Theme*

The novel has one theme with three propositions. The first is that emotions usually supercede reasoning in deciding moral action, but these emotions may be either positive or negative. The second is that theologies and moral philosophies have tended to encourage the restraint of negative, perhaps, instinctual emotions such as greed and vengeance, and encourage positive emotions such as sacrifice and altruism. The third is that these emotions together with reason try to act according to objective values, which exist and therefore can be taught.

*Writing Process*

I began writing this book as an exploration of characters that all had faith in something. Some of these faiths were quite opposed to each other. As in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the juxtaposition of opposing concepts draws the readers to ask questions and make their own conclusion. For example, the first chapter begins with the bible quote, “Do Not Worry.” Yet we find a character that has much to worry about and, to act as a moral character, must worry in order to make good decisions.

I also tried to make each chapter contain at least one main philosophical question. In this, I tried to mimic chapters from the Old Testament. There are several allusions to the Daniel of the Old Testament, his gift of prophesy, these prophesies being rather apocalyptic, the focus on being constant in your faith even when reason dictates against it, and Daniel’s friends that remain faithful to him.
The first two chapters of the book are written not only to establish a plot, but also to introduce two major themes: the first, is a question about the nature of redemption; the second, presents the nature of altruism. Daniel’s very nature reflects a purity of altruism. The problem for Daniel is that, though he is effective in helping people, a sense that his own emotion problems thwart his happiness and the feelings of being effective. This is also reflected in his prophetic dream. As the story progresses, Daniel become increasingly in control over situations in which his help is needed and uses his prophetic dreams to this benefit. Gavin, in the second chapter, is ineffective in helping people, but tries nevertheless. This philosophy is a clear rejection of the saying, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions,” and insists that apathy and hopelessness- espoused later by Boethius- a dangerous course. If Gavin is to be judged by the immediate outcomes of his efforts, he might be condemned by many. On the other hand, it is because Gavin keeps trying to help his friends and even strangers that he increasingly becomes effective towards the end of the book.

The third chapter, Rose, furthers the notion that consistent hope and help for fellow human beings is of the greatest value, even if they do not always respond as one might wish. The chapter presents a hopeful, sympathetic, and fantastical vision of Rose that come from Daniel’s imagination. His hope pays off in the story as Rose tries to become responsible for her sister, perhaps to help Freya avoid how Rose grew up on the road. Again, a theme is developed of not succumbing to ‘donor fatigue’ and holding hope for all people.
Two other characters, Isaiah and Kaba, further this theme. Isaiah is nearly destroyed by war. The same with Kaba, as his terrorist activities nearly destroy him morally. With Kaba, many proponents of the death penalty would probably say he is already beyond redemption. Yet, in the end, Isaiah does his best to redeem himself and the insinuation is that Kaba will find redemption by taking over Daniel’s good work. In case this idea seems to far-fetched for most people, I point to the case of Paul in the New Testament. Paul is introduced in the bible as a Pharisee prosecuting and murdering Christians. Yet he becomes Christianity’s second most important theologian after Jesus. My question is: How many Christians could read from Paul and then support the death penalty? Isaiah’s fruits of redemption are seen in Daniel. Kaba’s redemption has yet to be seen, but I ask my reader, “Will you have faith in him?”

This does not accept that all people will be revealed, but I use three other chapters to further develop this theme. While Isaiah is almost morally destroyed through the violence he engages in during the war, through violence Boethius is wholly destroyed. Further, Boethius spreads his message of ‘giving up on the world’ to the young and vulnerable. Calvin Johnson, while showing personal dislike for Boethius, is an advocate of vigilante justice- similar to the vigilante justice used to excuse ‘extraordinary renditions’ in our present ‘War on Terror.’ It is Calvin in the end that kills Daniel and, in his ignorance, lets the former terrorist free. The political question raised here is that whether violence is an effective means in reducing terrorism. Can political violence, legitimized by a government, really prevent more
individual political violence? If one looks at the Arab-Israeli conflict such actions, to me personally, does not look hopeful. In the Book of Daniel, I quite frequently mix questions of morality with political questions because in a democracy I do not see the two as separate.

Thus, I introduce a third character to talk about political violence - Big John. There is something in Big John’s character that makes him resist the political violence and harassment he has endured. Indeed, he becomes instrumental to the solution of returning Daniel back to the U.S. to find Kaba. What is the difference between Boethius, Isaiah, Calivin Johnson, and Big John as to the how they react to violence and injustice? I do not provide answers in the book, trusting to my audience to indulge in these questions.

While my opinions may, at times, be abundantly clear, I do not wish to provide solutions. I only can offer one example from my work at a juvenile detention center. I knew a youth who had shot someone in the leg. When he first arrived he was a constant disruption in class and even bragged about his actions. However, I saw two things in this youth: first, he was scared to death of getting out because he essentially had a death warrant on him; second, he was truly remorseful for what he had done. I remember him saying to me, “My life is over.” My reply was, “How much worse would things be for your soul if you had killed that boy? At least you have a chance of redemption.” To show that I meant what I was saying, on his birthday I bought his a pack of Skittles, as I did every youth at the center. His behavior dramatically changed. No more bragging about shooting someone, his
disruptions slowly decreased. And for what, a bag of Skittles? No, I can’t believe that. When a co-worker asked me why I gave the Skittles, I merely shrugged and said, “Someone has to love him.”

That may be the strongest theme in the Book of Daniel- that coercion may be effective for a time at curving people’s behavior, but it does nothing to change their moral thinking. Rose helps her sister as Daniel helped her. Isaiah adopts Daniel due to the love he finds with his wife. While many of my characters are completely fictional, many such as Rose, Freya, Big John, Gavin and others have some basis in reality. These are characters that I personally found hope in and have formed my own moral philosophies. Likewise, I related the story of giving that juvenile delinquent Skittles not for self-aggrandizement, but to show that my own moral thinking changes with those I encounter. Working with at-risk youth helped me finish my book and change my own moral reasoning. The greatest lesson I learned working with at-risk youth is that coercion and authority can control people’s behavior (often poorly), but consistent loving adults in their lives can help youths find hope and heighten moral reasoning. Indeed, if these youths had consistent, loving adults in their lives, I should think that youth crime and subsequent adult crime would experience dramatically lowered rates.

The Book of Daniel is not meant to provide solutions, just as Kohlberg’s dilemmas have no right or wrong answers. The book is intended to engage readers in asking themselves questions of morality and, above all, to reject apathy as a legitimate way of looking at today’s problems.
Learning Process

During the course of writing the novel, I held several different jobs. One was at a juvenile detention center. It quickly became apparent to me that emotionally distressed children could not concentrate, learn, or reason. I had the sense that these children had never faced a moral dilemma, that they were simply acting on impulse. Then, I heard a story about a juvenile that had broken in to an elderly woman’s house, hit her on the way, and then robbed her. He was caught because after he left the house, he had a feeling of remorse, and he returned to make sure she was OK. The boy reminded me of the character Kaba.

More importantly, the story reveals that this juvenile had a belief that there was something worse than getting caught. It is a belief in objective value. The controversy around teaching character education is that people don’t agree on what these objective values are. However, rather than deny the existence of objective value, it should be part of moral education to debate it.

Summary

This project has allowed me to explore the relationship between emotion and moral reasoning in a way that would have been impossible in a study. I was able to hone my writing skills as well as my thinking about how people act upon their moral decisions. I believe that it has informed my teaching, especially when dealing with at-risk youths.
CHAPTER FOUR

CONTENT

The following work of fiction entitled *The Book of Daniel* is the content of Chapter Four.
Chapter 1

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?” Mathew 6

I have begun this book, a diary of sorts, simply to produce a record of what I have witnessed and my thoughts upon what I saw. The reason for doing this is to try to comprehend for myself and others a series of events that seem to have no logical explanation. What has no explanation is that I experienced these events, at least in my mind, before they happened. I had dreams and visions in which I was present and acting during terrible tragedies. I wrote these visions in a journal, and I described them in perfect detail. It was this record that gives some proof that my story is true. I, myself, found it impossible that I might be a prophet or a clairvoyant, but then, I had to reconcile that indeed I seemed to have predicted the future. Dostoyevsky wrote in the *Brothers Karamazov*, and I am paraphrasing, that many people when faced with irrefutable evidence of something that seems like a miracle, would rather disbelieve their own senses and reject the evidence than believe in the miracle. For myself, I have chosen to believe that miracles are possible and occur. I have witnessed them, and I believe several have happened to me. The last miracle was quite different: It was an act of love by many people that prevented the most
terrible of calamities from occurring. Remember, love is not just a feeling; it is a practice, and if one does not continually practice love, it fades, corrupts, or just disintegrates.

So in the following pages you must judge for yourself about the possibility of miracles. Open your mind and ask questions without believing you know the answer to these questions. It has taken me almost my entire life to do exactly that: to ask questions without presuming the answers. I am not the sole author of this book; it has been a collaborative effort, written by many people, many friends, and one thing I am sure of is that, though I don’t know how the story will end, the last chapter shall surely not be mine. Read on, for you can only begin to understand if you have faith. Paul said that in the end there is faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love. That is true. But you can only love if you have hope that your love means something, and you must have faith to believe that your hope is not in vain. Have faith and read.
Daniel lay in a white room; all four walls were made of shadowy translucent linen, but on the fourth, the one Daniel was facing, there were two humanoid shapes outlined by an even more intense florescence. It was bright inside the room where Daniel was, and he felt that if he walked outside his eyes would be scorched. He knew, however, that the light could not be as intense as he imagined because every eight hours those shadows would dim, turn and fade away while another set of shadows replaced them in the same spot—the same exact spot! Daniel knew these shadows belonged to guards, his doctors had informed him so, but he had been in this infirmary for two days, and he had not seen a variance in position, nor an irregularity of schedule, not in the slightest, so that he began to believe that there were not people outside his linen cell, but rather machines or cardboard cutouts on some track. They did move slightly from time to time, but this always coincided with a breeze, the hurried entrance of the doctor, or a stampede of other shadows hurrying by. Were they real or not? It was maddening, and he studied these shapes with a sort of monomania, whereby if someone proves one thing is true or false, then the possibility for truth is no longer an illusion. What a perfect allegory, he thought, for here he was in Plato’s cave, ironically white, bright, and very clean, watching shadows to decipher truths that were constantly subverted by much more real reliable and terrible emotions telling him something was wrong—very wrong—and that whatever rational scientific facts might be presented to him by the attending doctors
on whether he might die or not all were inconsequential to whatever it was that was wrong. He knew that his life was not in jeopardy, though he indeed was recovering from an illness, and that the doctors were putting on a show, lying to him, and Daniel decided that the best thing to do was to play naïve and learn more. The barrier checking his progress into knowledge, or even the hallway, was not force; he could of course rip open the sheet at any moment and satisfy the tortuous curiosity. He had agreed to quarantining himself when his doctor told him that he might have contracted an extremely deadly version of the flu that was feared to become an epidemic. The doctors said that some people lived a few days, some contracted the virus and passed it without a sign, naturally immune, but still good for a ride. Though Daniel knew this was all a farce, he wanted to get to the bottom of why they were keeping him incarcerated.

Daniel had been feeling ill for a full day before he was hospitalized. But that was not what he had been hospitalized for. He did not know how much longer he could hold out not knowing, and he was feeling quite healthy again. He was brought there, however, under very different circumstances. He had several large gashes on his forehead, a broken nose, and purplish swollen cheeks that spoke of the severity of the blows they had received. Not a bone broken, however. He had been found in an alleyway, not far from Golden Gate Park, alongside another man more than twice his age. The other fellow was in worse shape and had suffered a shattered rib and a broken leg. The two clearly did not belong together.
The police heard that Daniel had fought off a man with a cane, an enormous demon who had fled deftly as the cops arrived. The man had not been halted, chased, or found, although an investigation was now underway. People gave contradictory descriptions of the person’s facial features, skin color, and attire—it was late, in a dark alley, from which they had poor perspectives. They only agreed that he was enormous, wrapped in black clothing, and he had a cane, which he had used extensively on both Daniel and the man Daniel was defending. Daniel was at first mad with rage having given as well as received quite a few painful blows, but in the end, if the cops had not arrived, Daniel probably would have lost. The real shame was that the witnesses did not step in to help Daniel and could see no sense in protecting a homeless person who “may have deserved a beating” for some unknown reason. In the end though, they all vehemently asserted that Daniel was just a passer-by, a good Samaritan. He had come upon this man being brutally beaten and had placed himself between the assailant, and fought off the man as best he could, until some shame-faced spectator hit upon the idea of calling the police. The police arrived very quickly, but they were not able to get much out of Daniel before he lost consciousness.

When Daniel awoke, he could sense he was underneath a blanket of pain medication. He still hurt, but what hurt more was that everything was foggy and remained so for the next three days. The doctor had sown up his face right there and a nurse came every four hours or so with an injection of medication and new ice packs. Daniel had seen himself in the mirror, and he was impressed at the doctor’s
work, and a few well-earned scars decorated a handsome face blended with the finest Oriental and Occidental features. He had tan skin, blackish-brown hair, and was a bit above average height with an athletic frame. He was a universal man in true form representing his constituents in the year 2027: the vast majority of the world’s population, battered, bruised, beleaguered, surrounded by ever more “things” and worries.

To add to the oddness of his captivity, he had not been able to talk to his father, though he was assured he had been contacted. Daniel could not leave the room to go to the telephone and, absurdly, no one was willing to surrender their cell phone, so that a lonely, hurt, bruised man of 28 years could talk to his father whom he had not seen in four years. At least he could talk to his mother, whom he had not seen in seven, but she was more of a moralist approving or disapproving from above rather than a conversationalist. She had passed away due to cancer. Her passing had affected both Daniel and his father, and had changed his father in such a way that Daniel felt he could no longer relate to him. That was the cause of the four year break, but both Daniel and his father had been in recent contact, decided that their past arguments were water under the bridge, and that what was important was reestablishing their relationship. You can now imagine the feeling of frustration that Daniel had that he was also being kept from his father.

There was a TV. It played endless sitcoms and sports, and he disliked it because he had long since forgotten who was playing for whom, and that stuff doesn’t really matter when you just want to know something of real importance. But
when the news came on Daniel brightened up and paid close attention. It came on five times during the day and night, which meant that he had seen twelve times and had been left with a confused, anxious, and later depressed mood. Would they not report it? Finally, the report Daniel had been waiting for came on. A young female reporter did her best to intone the gravity of the matter as she explained that there had been some mistakes in the initial reports, but now they could conclusively say that a bomb set off by a sole bomber had ripped through the C-wing of O’Hare’s, just before the doorway of a San Francisco flight that had been long grounded due to a winter storm. The blast had apparently killed three maintenance workers and had caused various injuries to the people inside the terminal. These last facts caused a perceptible change in Daniel’s facial expression revealing extreme aggravation. He said to himself, almost in a whisper, “That’s not it. That’s not how it happened? Why would they report it like that…?”

Daniel sat back and reflected upon the airport, when he was there, the letter and how, like himself, the man they were talking about on the television actually had some insight to the future. He tried to go over it all again.

Daniel woke suddenly at four in the morning, alarmed by the automated warning system, droning endlessly in repetition until no one pays attention to it. The voice seemed, for a moment, louder, more annoying, abrasive, even malicious. He
waited five minutes without moving, then he heard it again- the security warning. Duly advised, he sat up from a hard bed of blue vinyl-covered chairs and unconsciously surveyed his surroundings. There were bags strewn about, some seeming to have no owner, but as people had been sleeping in the airport for three days, things began to get a little lax, despite the very punctual security warnings. His peculiar perception persisted and all about him the florescent hues made everyone look sick and discolored, like in a late-night emergency room. This impression was continued when the man sleeping a few seats away had an outrageous coughing fit; the sound of phlegm rumbled in the man’s heaving chest like distant thunder, though not waking him in the slightest. In fact, now that Daniel had gained a more robust consciousness, he found that everyone in the room was sleeping, or at least seemed to be at first glance, and he felt an instinctive jealousy at their rest. He was sitting in an open area with four gates in view, sixty or seventy people stretched out on the vinyl chairs, propped against walls and corners, or sprawled out on the ground. This was a dense jungle of humanity; dense, it sweated, raised the humidity in the room and sucked out the oxygen as the vines and crawlers of people’s clothing, emergency blankets, luggage straps, and the occasional poorly placed limb threatening to trip someone up or wake the owner if the trip was hard enough. There were snores louder than lions, gaseous clouds that temporarily hung and poisoned a particular gate, packs of security guards that roamed but without a feast and by the third day began nipping at foreigners as if they were dangerous, but really because they were vulnerable, and some people in positions of authority feel
the need to lash out, bully, or just feel powerful and important. The security guards had succeeded in making everyone feel unsecure, and there was a palpable tension that hung in the air. It was chaotic and yet the room was motionless.

It was the third consecutive day that Daniel had woken in Chicago’s O’Hare airport. This winter had been one of the worst on record for much of the country and more than a few airports had been closed down by storms. To most, it was part of a conspiracy between weathermen, the FAA, and Mother Nature to ruin their travel plans and to thwart all efforts at escape. This is the indignation people feel when it is realized that man has not once and for all conquered nature. But nature felt no indignation, just the need to dispel an unusually large amount of water, received from an unusually warm Gulf of Alaska, above which a cloud mass had hovered for an unusually long time. The storm hung there for a while, drinking its fill and then it came on, lumbering like a drunken man racing to the bathroom for relief. It was, in fact, remarkable that they kept the airport open at all- but then, where could they tell the thousands of stranded travelers to go? Close hotels were all booked, and some still held to the hope that the storm would break soon. The whole city was in a state-of-emergency, and travel on the roads was extremely limited. As a result, the airport became a poorly provisioned shelter. Daniel, looking at the slumbering mob about him, shook his head and was glad that the emergency was nature, not man-made.

A sharp noise broke his meditations. One young, squinty, extremely thick-necked guard was passing through at that moment. He had sneezed and was now
eyeing Daniel with overt suspicion and malice which it appeared he considered to be the large part of his job. After making someone uncomfortable, he would move on. His theory was that if someone was not on edge, especially during these last three days, there was nefarious reason behind it. At first, such a look would have shocked Daniel and drawn him from his still dreamy state, but now he cast his eye lazily upon the guard, meeting his glare, without the slightest flinch. Daniel liked looking people straight in the eye, and when he caught them he could communicate volumes if the person was also in tune. The guard looked away somewhat dejected and hurried down the hall.

Daniel was about six feet in height, slender, well-muscled, a very healthy person. He had short straight dark hair and olive skin. He had been born in the Philippines but was adopted at the age of three, by an American couple. His father was a retired army officer who started a private company that contracted with the military. His mother had been a migrant worker from Guatemala, she became a schoolteacher, a loving wife and mother, but, as mentioned before she had passed away with cancer. Daniel loved his mother deeply and in some way refused to give up an active relationship with her. He talked to her in his prayers and could almost hear her responses, even if he knew he was creating the responses himself. His parents never saw him as anything other than their natural son, and he never saw them as other than his natural parents; he had completely forgotten everything from his first three years. His eyes were brilliant green, deep-set, kind and intelligent looking, but exceedingly emotional—they were by far the most individual feature he
had. He was simply incapable of hiding a feeling when he felt it deeply, and, at this age, he had just about given up trying. That is not to say that he could not control his emotions; he was rarely angry, and if he was frequently depressed, people did not often know so, for he hid it well. On the other side, his normal temperament was to be very cheerful, buoyant, happy. And he had the type of character that made people catch his happy vibe. He smiled at everyone and put forth a feeling of well-wishing because he truly wished everyone well. Still, he considered himself to be an emotional storm: looming, unpredictable, capable of sowing fertile valleys with great passion or devastating his own lunar landscape with what he often called “mourning for the world.” It was a feeling that would come over him when he thought about the injustices that happened to others he knew personally or the general injustice and suffering that man punishes man for greed, bigotry, meanness, vengeance, and hatred. Daniel wished so badly for these cruelties to end, knew that they would not, and so he would weep uncontrollably at times, as though he wanted to take on the pain of others, to take on their suffering if only to give them a moment of relief. He was a good man for he tried to help all he could, and he wept because not enough people asked themselves the most essential of all questions, “How Should I Behave?”

Daniel could hear a couple a few rows behind him, speaking in hushed, angry tones. They had come in while Daniel was playing stare-eyes with the guard. The argument was about relatives, but Daniel quickly picked up the signs that the subject of the argument was not important. Each was talking in a very suppressed tone and
using pleasantries such as “dear” or “sweetie,” but their tone, their inflexibility, the palpable rise in emotion of each exchange translated to contempt, and it was clear that they were addicted to the emotional surges. When they had worn out one issue, they set off on another as they walked away, the anger in their voices floating behind them like ghosts. He was alone again, in the midst of a sea of slumbering compatriots. Then, out of the corner of his eye, some movement caught his attention. He turned his head to see a man sitting in the furthest visible corner looking back at him very intently. The man’s glare was not even slightly interrupted by making eye contact with Daniel, but there was no doubt that contact had been made. He had the curious feeling that this man had been watching him even as he slept. The man, almost in response to Daniel’s thoughts, got up and began to walk towards him, in a hurried but not hostile manner. He walked with his hands behind his back, his torso bent at a slight angle, as though he were walking in a strong wind. He looked to be about fifty, maybe a bit older, short and stout, partly balding with a gray crown that was brushed back and a neatly trimmed gray beard. He wore glasses, which gave him a scholarly air, but his dress was something between a priest and a rancher. He wore an all black suit, black boots, but a black shoestring-tie instead of a collar. It was odd to see someone wearing such a tie at four in the morning and its inconsistency struck Daniel as slightly comical.

Nevertheless, Daniel straightened up politely in his seat preparing to greet the man, for the man clearly intended to meet him. About ten feet away, the man stopped, at first facing Daniel, but then quickly turned to the side, looked out the
window that was adjacent to Daniel’s right, and pretended for a moment that Daniel
did not exist or that the reason for his movements was to get a good look at the snow
falling on the black runway. His mannerisms were very odd, jerky and unnatural.
At last, he began to speak, but he still looked out the window as he did so.

“Quite the storm, eh?” The man said in a gravelly but gentle voice. Daniel
nodded in reply, but said nothing, so the man continued:

“I haven’t seen anything like this for years, except once, perhaps, before your
time, when I was stuck in Minneapolis for a week. Well, that was not because of
snow… but Minne, what a wonderful city. Have you been there? No? Well, despite
being so cold, it’s a warm, welcoming city—the lakes, the parks, and especially the
people. Maybe the nicest people of any city in the U.S., in my estimation, that is.
Do you know that Minneapolis has more recovering addicts per capita than any other
city in the U.S.? It’s true, but they are not, of course, all from the indigenous
population. It’s because of all the clinics and the social welfare system there, they
attract these people in need and Minnesotans believe in a second chance. And that’s
rare enough nowadays. Speaking of rare, I knew a remarkable man once in
Minneapolis… would you like to hear his story? It’s worth listening to.”

“Sure,” Daniel said intrigued by this rambling character.

“Well, this man was born in Arkansas, but I only knew him when he lived in
Minne, after his ‘miracle,’ as he called it.” He put special emphasis on this word,
suggesting that he mocked the concept. “He made his living as a mechanic, a damn
good one too, but his former employment was quite different. He had been in and
out of juvenile detention centers his whole life, arrested countless times, and as a young adult, he had already four felonies in three states for miscellaneous drug possessions, burglary and vandalism. A fifth conviction for just about anything would have put him away for thirty years or more. He knew that, he knew he was doing wrong and he even knew he didn’t want to do wrong, but he said he couldn’t stop. It was more than just the drugs, it was a love of the perverse, an unwillingness to control his passions. He loved being out of control and he hated being out of control, but he loved it more. He told me that crime, or the criminal life, rather, was in his blood; his father was a petty thief, his mother trafficked drugs, most of his grandparents, uncles, cousins, whatever…had been involved aspects of organized or disorganized crime. He said he would get out of jail one day and be high by the evening, then the cycle would begin, driven by the necessary to score, to get laid, or drunk or for the simple rush of being ‘wanted,’ and not in the right way, you know. He’d spend a couple months getting wound up, and each time the crash grew worse and worse. But he had a conscience, it gnawed at him, shamed him and refused to die before he did. He would sober up and curse himself for his weakness, even as he dreamed of doing the same again. So he considered killing himself…but he got arrested first for burglary.

“He was over thirty and looking at as many years in jail, he thought his life was effectively over. Each day his despair grew and he began looking for ways to end his life, knowing it would be harder after the trial, when he’d be transferred to the state penitentiary. Then this man told me something quite unbelievable. It was
his third day in the county jail and he started going through withdrawal from
Oxycoton, his drug of choice. He was thrashing about in his cell, with the DTs,
being tortured by the spirits of his sins and nightmarish visions of hell- at least that’s
how he described it. He got so bad that guards had to rush in to restrain him, or else
he might kill himself by knocking his head against the wall or something, but when
they came in, he fought back, and a guard clubbed him hard on the head. He went
unconscious. He said that while he was unconscious, he was visited by an angel who
agreed to wipe away the debt for all of his sins, if he would only begin to live the
good-life, otherwise, he could choose right then and there to die. He said to the
angel that if he had to spend the next quarter century in prison, he would rather die. I
guess the angel had not been expecting this answer, for in his dealings most people
had at least some respect for their lives. But here this man didn’t, so why should he
make any deal with him—let him die, let him rot? Well, I don’t know if the angel
spoke to God about this, or whatever, but he actually came back with a better offer:
O.K., you get to live, and we will put mercy into the hearts of those trying his case.
Again, however, my friend refused—he had neither respect for himself nor faith in
his fellow man. And he continued!... saying that the deal he had been offered in the
first place, in his life, was a shady one and that if God wanted to do business with
him, he have to make up for cheating him in the past. Well, the angel, of course, was
positively offended and left again, giving up on the man completely. But someone
must not have given up on him, for the angel came back again. He knew that if this
man would be saved, on the moment of his repentance, he’d lose all arrogance and
indignation, he would weep at the mercy and benevolence that was shown him. The
final offer was accepted, and the angel was proved right.

“When my friend woke, he said that he was perfectly calm, almost blissfully
so. Gone was the shaking, the misery, the guilt. But he was not alone in his cell.
Sitting there was another person, restrained and writhing in agony. He went over to
the man, who was unconscious with delirium, and studied his face. Then he jumped
back in terror. It was him, or, at least looked like him, but yet there he was also
completely detached. He said he escaped from the prison that day at recreation, but
no one noticed him because he had left himself in his cell.

“My friend was free again, but even more so because the person who was
addicted was left in the cell, locked away for eternity. He came to Minneapolis. He
said he got “new blood,” for he knew that everyday there was someone being
punished for his actions. He received his freedom, but now had the responsibility of
living everyday, as if for another. So, he went into rehab, for he could not go on
living someone else’s life high. He renounced crime, changed his name, as he was
no longer the same man, and he got a new Social Security number to prove it. By
the time I met him, ten years later, he was doing quite well for himself working with
at-risk youth, who may have gone down his same path. He had a pretty wife and a
very rambunctious young boy. He never told me the terms of his deal with God, but
I have no doubt he’s holding his side of the bargain. He was like that, some would
have put him down as a criminal, but I knew him to be a man of his word, a man
who keeps his agreements because not doing so would harm himself as much as
others. But the point of the story I liked was the idea of negotiating with God. Or, even better: God negotiating with man. For that alone, I felt inclined to disbelieve him. Yet he was so sincere, though, when he told me. Well, what do you think?"

Daniel didn’t know quite what to say after all that. “That’s quite the story. I’d like to believe it, but it doesn’t seem very possible. I don’t think God does much negotiating with us. If he does deal directly with us, he seems to have a poor track record of backing the wrong people. I mean King David from the Old Testament always seemed to me to be a genocidal maniac, going into towns, lining up the inhabitants along three lines and randomly putting to death two of those lines with saws and swords. No, I think that every good action one person does to another, every desire to right one’s wrongs, to love others and treat them well, and in the beauty of Nature, of all life, and music, very much in music, that is how God is present. I suppose I’m a transcendentalist.”

“You seem to be somewhat of a biblical scholar,” said Dr. Keene.

“No, not a scholar, but very well read. I’ve always been interested in just about everything and, since I was young I’ve always been somewhat of an insomniac which has given me time to read much more than the average person. I’m not a scholar, just someone who loves to learn.”

“Do you know the Book of Job?” Dr. Keene asked.

“Of course,” Daniel replied calmly. He was not the type of person to become uncomfortable discussing theology.
“Well then, don’t you think it’s a load of crock. I mean, the story. God replaces Job’s wife and children with a new set, but that doesn’t quite make up for killing off his first wife and kids. That is, if he’s a good God.”

“You miss the point. The meaning of the story is that anything in this world can be taken from you, but if you do your best to behave as a good person, that can never be taken away, even if you die.”

“Ah, you certainly are the right man for me. I knew it when I saw you, and I’ve seen it in everything you have done the last few days.” Dr. Keene said this with a smile, but there was no humor in his voice.

Daniel raised his eyebrows with suspicion and suppressed alarm. “So I am to take it that you have been stalking me for the last three days?”

“I suppose, but believe me, I meant no harm. I just have a favor to ask and I’m absolutely sure that you will do that favor for me.”

“Why are you so sure?”

“Because you cannot stop helping people. It’s like a compulsion for you. You help people even when they don’t want your help and you help people even when you, yourself, need help.”

“Please explain,” said Daniel, feeling uncomfortable and unsure about the compliments. This uncomfortable feeling triggered something in Daniel. He felt like he had already had this conversation, wrote it in his diary, but could not recall how it ended.
He removed his backpack that was taking up two seats and asked the man to sit next to him. Though the man sat in the further seat, a heavy smell of alcohol could be detected, pouring off him like a mist. Daniel looked closer at the man trying to make out if he was drunk. Dr. Keene’s eyes were clear and his words precise, but there was something strange and sometimes provoking about him; it increased as their conversation went on and made Daniel very unsettled. Perhaps realizing he had been found out, Dr. Keene pulled a small flask out from the inside pocket of his coat and took a drink from it. Daniel’s eyes went to the flask and lingered for a moment too long.

“I first noticed you two days ago, when you interceded in getting that lost child back to her parents. I was also going to intervene, but you beat me to it, and I had to follow you to make sure that you were taking the child back to her parents. You did a good thing, but I was surprised to see you walked off with such a depressed look, not a hint of the satisfaction that smacks upon most people when they do the slightest deed. I was so intrigued that I had to follow you. You hovered around outside the bar for quite a long time, until a woman who had dropped some money, caught your attention. I saw you run over and pick it up and return it to the woman who was clueless that she had dropped it. Well, I was in need of someone that I could trust, and you seemed to fit the bill, so I followed you a little more.”

“I’m sorry…thank you for the compliments, but really, I don’t want them even if you’re being sincere. And, you know, it’s kind-of rude to go around following people,” Daniel interjected.
“Forgive me. It may have been rude, but you were oblivious. So what could it matter? Just humor me another minute and then I will say good-bye. I promise. Finally, I followed you to that diner and saw you buy that homeless man a meal and sit down to eat with him. You talked to him for a good amount of time and I think he enjoyed someone taking the time to listen to him and treat him squarely far more than he liked the meal. Well, now this was too much. It seemed you were just wandering about looking for good deeds to do. On the way back to the airport, however, you looked like you just pushed someone down the stairs. It was as if you were embarrassed by your actions, but yet you did them anyway. I said to myself, ‘Now there’s a man with a troubled conscience.’ You are trying to pay this conscience off, so now I will provide a way.”

“You followed me out of the airport?” Daniel asked, his eyes narrowing.

The man took no notice now. “Now here’s my point: Underneath where I was just sitting is a letter taped to the bottom of the chair. You see the vacant chair from which I just came? That’s the one. I need you to go get that letter in a moment, even if you think it’s a strange request, you can’t fail me. That letter is very important; I need you to simply deliver a message to a friend and more rests upon you doing so than you can imagine. Deliver this message, and it will lead you to a thousand good deeds. I’ll absolve you of whatever it is that you’ve done, just do this small favor for me.”

Finally, Daniel exploded, “What the hell are you talking about? What gives you the right to go around absolving people? You’re a psychiatrist not a priest. And
speak plainly, no more of this mysterious spy-game bullshit.” He began to get up again, but the man stood up first and so he remained sitting.

“I can’t explain it any more. I’m leaving. Look, I’ve put my faith in that you’re the right kind of person, now do the right thing. If you want another reason to do what I ask, let me say that the man I am sending you to is a philosopher, he’ll have answers for you.” He paused for a moment and then said, “Don’t judge me too harshly afterwards, and I’ll do the same for you, even with my vantage point.”

Then, completely unexpected, Daniel saw Dr. Keene’s eyes glistening and an actual tear roll down his cheek. He began walking backwards towards the gate door.

“Where are you going? Are you OK?” Daniel asked, by instinct softening his tone. Something was dreadfully wrong; he could feel it building, like the gathering of a wave. He realized now that this was the exact waking-dream that he had written about in his journal. Daniel knew what was about to happen but was paralyzed.

Dr. Keene didn’t reply at first, his hand raised to wipe his eyes. When he had reached the door, he stopped, turned towards Daniel, and stood for a moment, as if waiting for something. Their eyes met and, in a flash, Daniel finally understood what was to about happen. Still, he remained frozen. The man smiled sheepishly and then swiped a card through an electronic key and punched in a code. The door unlocked, and he opened it.

“Help me win my bet. Good-bye, Daniel.” And with that, he disappeared inside.
The door clicked shut as Daniel went rushing towards it, his fingers just missing the closing of the door. He looked through the window. The tunnel was not connected to a plane at the time, and he could see a silhouette disappearing into an aura of orange light and falling snow. The vision was suspended for a moment and imprinted on his mind. The man inside the tunnel turned around and then screamed something incomprehensible in what Daniel could only guess to be German. He thought for a moment that even obscured by the shadows and the clouds of breath that poured from him that he and Dr. Keene were at that moment looking eye to eye. Then, a tremendous explosion went off at a terrifying volume, waking everyone and setting off the alarms, but without tearing into the terminal. Despite the sound, Daniel was unharmed, except that all sound had been swallowed by a loud ringing. He had ducked behind the door, which had remarkably remained undamaged, and he now sat there as though watching a film. People began running everywhere, others rocked in their seats crying like children waking from a nightmare. No one was hurt, however. The blast had not done the slightest damage to the inside of the terminal, and there had not been any ground crew out for days. After a moment, while the world unraveled around him, Daniel got up in a shocked, dream-like state and looked outside. The end of the tunnel was completely destroyed and billowing with black smoke. Dr. Keene, even his remains, was nowhere to be seen.

In general, the panic that overtook the airport had an inverse relationship as to the distance to the scene. Those farthest from the actual explosion, acted as though they were personally under attack, fighting each other, clogging the exits,
pushing each other out of the way, and making escape impossible for everyone else to escape. Those closest sat stunned and shaken, for they could see that it was over. But no one knew what had happened, except for Daniel, and he stood staring into space, still seeing the man’s silhouette through the smoke-clouded glass. Eventually, though, a tidal-wave of terror began building as people hurried to leave. Some people grabbed their luggage, others grabbed their children, and some forgot both. All the children and more than a few adults were crying. The mounting terror itself was now itself a threat. Security ran everywhere adding to the commotion and congestion, and soon the crush on the security gates became impassable. A riot was imminent.

Finally, a group of security, led by a very large officer, with the expression of a man strolling through a country park, took control of the situation. The security at most of the country’s airports had been privatized over the last few years, and this was a new force, comprised almost exclusively of professionals who had served for extensive periods in either the military or the police. The officer in charge took in the situation, exuding intelligence and confidence. He got on top of a row of seats and was able to call everyone’s attention within range of his voice.

“The situation will be momentarily under complete control. Any disturbance or failure to follow these instructions will only put yourselves and others at risk. For the sake of everyone’s security these instructions will be followed: Everyone will stand absolutely still until the jam is cleared, those hurt in the front are to be
removed, and then everyone is to exit in an orderly fashion. If anyone is perceived as being disorderly, they will be considered a threat and detained.”

So persuasive was the officer and so definite his commands, that the crowd felt immediately compelled to calm down, if only through some base, instinctual obedience. People stopped pushing towards the exit, others stopped sobbing but maintained a tentative state, and some people even replaced the luggage with which they had just been making off. Those who had been hurt or trampled in the crush were immediately taken by the guardsmen for medical treatment at the directions of the officer. As soon as the crowd was brought under control, the officer left and went through the different terminals. It was a remarkable thing to see, a wave of calm spreading from this one man, like a general of old before his barbarian horde.

The gate where the explosion had been was actually one of the last to be reached by security, since all movement had been away from that epicenter. By the time they arrived, a great gallery of people had lined the windows to watch the smoldering boarding bridge. It seemed that the explosion had been designed to burn exceptionally hot, but in a localized area as nothing other than the immediate structure was harmed, but the bridge itself was now completely disintegrated. As no one else had been hurt, Daniel felt a wave of sympathy for the strange man. What was it all about anyway? It was madness!

When the guards arrived and began clearing the gate, Daniel snapped out of his stunned state. He remembered the letter and now, with such a mystery surrounding the whole experience, Daniel felt that he very much had to see it. But
then he considered the consequences and hesitated, for a moment and then another…but no, he was suddenly and unexpectedly so compelled to get that letter, he knew that he would make a try for it. He wondered how would he get it without looking suspicious, searching under chairs for something that was taped beneath.

Regardless, Daniel walked straight against the flow of the crowd towards the far gate. A guard stood right before the row of chairs where Mr. Keene had been sitting and so Daniel began looking about, as if he had lost his luggage. The guard tapped him on the shoulder and pointed out (though no one was really going anywhere), but then the guard was called to assist some elderly travelers who had gotten slightly trampled. Daniel quickly walked over, sat in what he thought was the most likely seat, subtly bent over his knees like he was going to tie his shoes and reached under.

It was the wrong seat. He moved one to the left and tried again. His hand immediately came upon an envelope taped extremely well to the underside of the seat. Daniel had to struggle with it for a moment before getting it free and by then he had attracted the attention of another guard, who began walking in his direction. A group of people passed between them, and Daniel used this chance to shove the envelope up his pant leg and covered the bottom with his sock. The tape tore his leg hair, but at least he was sure that it was not going to fall out. He stood up as the guard arrived.

“You’re gonna have to leave this section of the terminal” the guardsman was saying. “Just go with the group, everyone is being interviewed before they can go.”
“I talked to the man right before he blew himself up,” Daniel stated. He didn’t know why he said this. It was true, and he was probably the only person who could shed any light on the situation, but his instinct at first was to remain anonymous, so that, innocent as he was, he would not be implicated in the crime whatsoever. But for some reason, he felt it was even more distasteful at that moment to be herded into the crowd, and he knew very well that before he left the building, someone would have identified him as the last person to talk to the bomber and therefore, he would be detained anyway.

“You talked to who? …Come with me,” the man said forcefully.

The guardsman escorted him to a dark-suited man, who stood surveying the scene and appeared to be part of the investigation. By now, some degree of order had been established, and at last the flow of people was unleashed from the room. People drained out, shaking their heads; some still sniffling, and others talking excitedly. Within minutes Daniel found himself the lone civilian in the room.

“This man wishes to speak with you. He has information.” The guardsman pointed at Daniel.

“I don’t know exactly what happened. I only know it was one guy who blew himself up, and I talked to him for a minute before he did it. It was sudden, I mean, he didn’t give any indication that he was going to blow himself up. He had a security card, though, and he opened the door with it,” Daniel said hurriedly.
The man whom he was talking to looked at him steadily, as if seizing him up. He said nothing for a minute and this, for some reason, made Daniel feel guilty. Finally, the man spoke. “What did you talk about?”

“Nothing really, well, I suppose he was talking about philosophy, but I couldn’t tell why he wanted to talk to me about it.” Daniel paused, “He introduced himself as Dr. Keene. He was a psychologist.”

The man simply nodded. “Why was he talking to you in the first place?”

“I don’t know… except that I was the only one awake. Maybe he just wanted to, you know, dramatize things. Everyone loves a stage, don’t they? I’m not trying to be callous or make light of anything, but I don’t think there was any motive, other than the guy was crazy. I guess he’d have to be…” Daniel’s voice trailed off. He knew for a fact that the man with whom he had just spoken was not crazy and saying so seemed like a sort of betrayal.

He again felt very sorry for the man who had spent his last minutes with him. Maybe it was a cry for help, and he had failed to understand it in time. And why was that? Maybe he had a gut-feeling about what the man was about to do, but had hesitated, and if he had acted immediately, maybe the man would be alive now. Ah, but that’s bullshit, he thought. This man had laid a burden upon him. Should he feel sorry for this man he didn’t even know and had just taken his own life? It did not matter because of course Daniel felt sorry, very sorry for Dr. Keene, whatever he had done. Emotion began to overcome him. This line of thinking only made him more depressed, and he began falling into an emotional collapse. The man went on asking
him questions, though he didn’t hear them. With only the slightest effort of concentration he might have been able to, but he didn’t even have that. Daniel just stood there, staring blankly ahead, and his interrogator, now becoming furious, could have started beating him, and he wouldn’t have gotten a response. Daniel sat down, put his head in his hands, and stayed there motionless. Then, all at once, he came out of the dream again.

“I’m sorry, sir. I’d be glad to help in any way I could,” Daniel said very seriously.

The man told Daniel to go with a security guard. He said he would be with him shortly. Daniel was led (now wishing again that he had kept quiet) into an immaculate empty room. The guard who had escorted him without saying a word the entire time, left in equal silence. Daniel sat there letting everything that had just occurred sink in; a curious feeling washed over him, similar to the wearing-off of anesthesia.

Daniel felt there was something eerily significant about Dr. Keene’s suicide, something that affected him personally, beyond the tragedy of event itself. He felt this because Dr. Keene chose him purposefully, rather than at random, and whether it existed or not, Daniel saw a chain of causality stretching back several months. He had not been himself for quite a while; so long, in fact, that he was very worried that this new disposition was permanent. His thoughts were interrupted by the same dark-suited man walking into the room, talking as he came. In his hand was Daniel’s journal.
“I watched the tape just before I came in here. Maybe you didn’t know the bomber, but you sure got to know him, and he sure acts as though he knows you. Yet you can barely remember a thing he said…and by the way, no Dr. Jonathon Keene, registered as a psychologist fits this guy’s profile. We can’t get any ID on him, even though we’ve got his prints, his facial scan, even the retina scans these new security cameras have” The agent spoke with a sense of triumph at how quickly he was able to get this information and with pride at all of the surveillance technology. Ability like that was not to be trifled with. Then the questioning began. The man had been asking these questions continuously, without much variance, for quite sometime now, as though he might yet get Daniel to trip up. If his suspicions were easing, he didn’t want to show it. Finally, he asked his first question last, “Are you sure the man said his name was Dr. Keene.?”

Daniel shrugged, “That was his name- I’m sure of it.”

“But everyone forgets names, how can you be sure?”

“I just know I’m right.”

“Look, even before he comes over to you, one camera shows him staring what I believe to be in your direction. Then another camera records you waking up, and within a few minutes the bomber came into frame. It’s like he was waiting for you to wake. I suppose he could have just been waiting for someone to wake to show off a little, but I don’t know, something tells me that he was intent on you. And you’re telling me you have no idea why?”
Daniel, very frustrated, replied, “I told you I have no idea who that guy was or why he killed himself. He was disturbed, angry, depressed, something, I don’t know.” He had not told them of the letter or Dr. Keene’s last request.

“Why is it, then, that you jumped up and ran to the door? I think you knew what was about to go down. In fact, you knew precisely what was about to go down,” the man said holding up Daniel’s journal, “In fact, it’s written all in here, even some of the lines from your conversation are recorded in here. The detail you use, you describe everything perfectly, and yet we’ve been able to estimate from tests on the ink from your journal that you wrote this nearly three months ago. So?”

“So?” Daniel repeated, and it was quite clear that he was just as mystified as the interrogator.

The interview continued for a while, but just for form as the agent seemed to be satisfied that Daniel was telling the truth and that the mystery would not be explained, at least not yet. At the end of it, the agent told Daniel it would be best if he made himself available for the next day or two.

“No way,” Daniel said, calmly, but as though there was no discussion of this matter. “I’ve been here way too long anyway…” Here, he was cut-off by a security guard entering and delivering a piece of paper to the agent. The agent began to read it as Daniel rose and went to the door. Before walking out, the agent spoke to him:

“Where did you say you were traveling to?”

“San Francisco,” Daniel replied.
“Huh.” The man said, his eyes squinting somewhat. “What a coincidence, that’s where this guy was from.”

“Yeah, what a coincidence.” Daniel said. “Could I have my journal back?”

The man laughed softly, insincere. “Well, I suppose you can, we’ve made a copy of every page, of course.”

“Of course,” Daniel replied with full understanding.

“You can’t explain it?”

“No.”

“Yes, well, I don’t believe in that stuff. But I sure can’t make sense of it all.”

“Neither can I.”

“I believe you and that’s why we’re letting you go. It’s just too impossible…but you know we’ll be keeping an eye on you.”

“I know you will,” Daniel said. And with that the book was given back to Daniel and he caught the first flight to San Francisco.

Flights had started that evening, and Daniel was on the first one to San Francisco. He waited until he was in the air to read the letter. It simply read:

Dear Daniel:

If you are reading this, then I know I am successful, and I’m sure that I will be successful, though I’m sure you will find that word more than a little ironic. Please give the exact details of my death to a dear friend of mine, a man named Boethius. Of course that’s not his real name, but that’s what he goes by, and I know him by no other name. Tell him I win the bet and that he knows how to repay me.
Yes, I know it’s an odd request, but still deliver to him the details of my death and make sure to mention that I was in my right mind, as I believe you know I was.

Whatever you may hear later, you know the truth. That is all. Simple, eh? But many lives may depend on your actions and I thank you most sincerely,

Boethius lives at: 4311 Hoover Ave Apt. 4, San Francisco

Yours with gratitude,

Jonathon Keene

He read the note on the plane several times and then began examining it as if there might be something else to it, some secret code written in invisible ink or something. There was nothing, which was more than a little frustrating. Finally, Daniel got an odd look from the woman sitting next to him. She was exceptionally large and with her tray down she was forced back, making Daniel feel like she was reading over his shoulder. He put his own seat back to contemplate. Two things bothered him. The first, was that Dr. Keene obviously had known much more about him than he had let on, which made the man seem even more freaky than before. The second hinged on the word “bet.” Was it the “bet” that Dr. Keene was going to kill himself, or that he, Daniel, was going to deliver some foolish message about his death? He felt a strong resistance to satisfy Dr. Keene’s bet but bound at the same time. He tried his hardest to sleep on it.

Daniel touched down in San Francisco at six in the evening. It was dark, but just so, as they had been riding the sunset most of the flight, and a faint glow still
came from the West. He hadn’t been able to get in touch with his father, but he left a message, a message that was now useless. He found his way onto a transit-line leading into the city, then walked the remaining way to his father’s house; it wasn’t far. His father had moved from the house where Daniel grew up closer to downtown where he worked. Daniel passed along some familiar streets and remembered, with a certain fondness, that his old elementary school was near-by. He had a strange urge to go see it but didn’t.

He walked on and finally identified the house his father had described. His father was not home, but Daniel found the key hidden under the porch steps where his father had said it would be. Daniel went in and admired the place. It was simple, austerely furnished, yet with an elegance that was an inherited taste from his departed mother. He found a note explaining that his father, much to his regret, had to go back work and that they would catch up later. Daniel immediately wrote a return note, explaining that he had plans for the evening and that they would have to catch up later that night or the following morning. Next, he called his friends Gavin and Luke to actually make plans to meet in a few hours. He was tired and feeling a bit ill, so he searched the cabinets for something to sustain him. As the coffee brewed, Daniel found himself zoning-out at his ghostly reflection on the glass coffee pot as it filled with hot black liquid.

It was not until a second, then a third cup of coffee that Daniel felt either emotion or reason. He had made himself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, which was unsatisfying, but didn’t require any cooking. Slowly, his strength crept back,
even if it was only an artificial strength. He had felt bead of perspiration on his forehead and a dull ache in his shoulders, but the caffeine overcame this for a while. Suddenly feeling very lonely, he decided to get some fresh air, walk about the city before going to the bar where he was to meet his friends. He did not want to reflect anymore on what he had just experienced that morning. He simply wanted to go out and enjoy himself. He locked up the house and began to walk quickly in the cold moist air.

Daniel enjoyed walking immensely. He would sometimes get up early on a Sunday and begin walking in any particular direction that struck him. By noon, he might have traveled to the other side of the city, and then clear out of it by mid-afternoon, perhaps coming home only around dinner, sometimes later. During these jaunts, a continuous stream of daydreams passed through his head, sometimes in words, like a story being read, and other times a compilation of lucidly passing scenes like an unedited movie. He had two favorites that had been “playing” since he was a kid, growing each year and changing with the fashions of his mind, though not necessarily maturing. The first was about a girl, actually, a ghost girl. As morbid as that may sound it wasn’t at all to the mind of a child, for this ghost was beautiful, sweet, and quite the same as everyone else, except for the fact that no one except him could see her. While this made the girl exceptionally lonely, it was a blessing for him, for he could love her while others could not, and thus he could supply her every emotional need. It was a very selfish dream, but perhaps that’s a romantic’s understanding of love—pure devotion, in return for the knowledge that
not an ounce of that devotion is wasted. Anyway, the girl aged with him and occasionally made appearances when he felt especially lonely on a walk.

The second daydream revolved around traveling back to historical times, with all the scientific knowledge of modern times. His interest here was not to study or discover or even to change history, but rather to help people on a greatly magnified level. He could, for instance, save millions of lives by introducing antiseptics a century before their times. Or, on a more modest level, he might simply bring with him thousands of cheap wristwatches to feudal France, sell them for a fortune to the aristocracy, and then rescue thousands from poverty. It was a childish dream, but rather innocuous compared to the fantasies that many people walk around with. But beyond that, it said something both good and bad about Daniel’s personality—that he had a great desire to help people, but was rarely satisfied with what he achieved.

Anyway, this was the daydream that he was walking around with now. He was in the Philippines, at the turn of the last century, during the Spanish-American War. (He had just read a book on Filipino history, as he was to travel there in two weeks). In his dream, as he had read in the book, U.S troops had been poisoning villagers’ wells by throwing dead animals in them, in order to flush out rebel Filipino fighters. Daniel was helping the villagers by giving them water-filters and antibiotics. After all he had been through, perhaps he could be excused if his imagination could not think of any better way to give assistance.

He had walked many blocks when a curious fact occurred to him. He had seen almost no other people on the streets. In any city it might be considered an
oddity to walk the number of blocks he had, five or six, without seeing another pedestrian, but in San Francisco, so dense and populated, it was doubly so. He shrugged—there was, after all, a never endless stream of three-lane traffic racing past Daniel up the hill. Maybe everyone was just driving? When he came upon a less traversed side street that he recognized, he turned on to this instead. Along the sides were young willows, barren, except for a few just beginning to bud. Part-way down the street he noticed a man sitting in a car parked on the side of the street with the engine off. He thought for a moment that he had just seen the car park, but he couldn’t be sure, for he was still lost in his head. A moment later, though, Daniel heard a car start behind him, and it drove by at a very slow pace. A few minutes later, the car came back the other way, but Daniel could not see the driver. Already edgy from this morning, Daniel began to feel extremely uncomfortable.

On the next block, Daniel again heard a car slow behind him. He walked on for a minute then stopped and turned around defiantly as the car pulled up. To his surprise, the car was not the same. A man leaned out of the window waving a sheet of paper in his hand. He was nearly bald with a pudgy face covered with stubble and was wearing coke-bottle glasses so thick that they seemed like goggles. From the first look, the man was almost too comical to believe. He wore something similar to a leisure-suit that was out of style even when such items were in, and he was gesticulating wildly, as though his words were creatures taking flight, and he wished to catch them. Daniel, feeling the tension drain from his body, could discern little of what the man was saying.
“…for hours, and can’t find the goddamn place. I’m late. Could you…could you just.” The man said thrusting the paper into Daniel’s hands as he approached. He was now literally hanging out of the window, resting on his ample abdomen. “Are you from around here?”

“Yeah… but no,” Daniel replied, not bothering with the contradiction. He studied the paper which contained directions written in a barely legible script. The man continued talking.

“Well, I’m sorry, sir, sorry. Sorry to bother you, but do you know how to get this place. I’ve been…” and again began rambling in a hoarse, but unusually high-pitched voice, like a soprano that had smoked two packs a day for 20 years. Daniel tuned him out, so as to read the address and poorly scribbled directions. As it turned out, he did know the place and was surprised that his knowledge of the city did not seem diminished through absence. Daniel had to give the directions several times, and still, when the man drove off, he thought the man would get lost.

He felt ridiculous for being so paranoid earlier, even though he had a right to be. It must have been getting close to ten, a good time, Daniel thought, to cut his walk short and head straight to the bar. A few blocks after crossing Market St., he came to a dirty white building with a solid black door, behind which could be heard the pulse of music. Wrapping around the side of the building was a fenced in area, about the size of a parking lot, from which the sound of a band and a chorus of a hundred muffled voices. His head began to tingle, sweat was already thick on his
brow despite the chill, and he entered the gaping mouth whose throat of pulsing red lights took a moment of adjustment.

Upon entering, the bar looked so crowded as to be impassable. There was a long bar on the left at least two deep with people waiting for drinks, while three bartenders hurriedly supplying them with drinks. The air was thick and moist, smelled of beer and sweat, and almost choked Daniel when he walked in. He scanned the room, while showing his ID to a bouncer. He saw two open doors in the back leading to an outdoor area from which the sound of band permeated the din of the crowd. That was where his friends would be, and he was glad of it. Gavin, Luke, and Rose, finally Rose, a friend he had for years but had never met. All that will be explained a bit later, in its proper order.

Along the way, he was jostled hard in the back and was pushed into a girl, who spilled a good portion of her drink down his shirt. He apologized profusely, and the girl smiled sweetly, not hearing a word he said, but pacifying his embarrassment. He walked on feeling the music begin to come over him. Outside, everyone was moving. Most were dancing or shaking where they stood to a funk band that played like an omnipotent hand creating waves in one continuous sea of people. It was Gavin’s band. Gavin, tall, lanky, but athletic; a dancer who never missed a step, a runner who never stumbled, a soccer player who could never be knocked off the ball. In his hands was a brilliant red acoustic/electric guitar. To his right was a Rastafarian who sang straight from his soul, and to his right was a short beautiful
Latina with a voice ten times her size, a sweetness that would bring you to your knees, and a roar that would pound you into the ground and raise you up again. There was a bassist, a shaven-headed juggernaut of a man, playing an up-right that nearly obscured him completely. Behind them all was a giant black man, Big John, one of Gavin’s best friends, and the man hit the drums as if he was trying to wake the grey wolf of Raggnarock. The band played as the tightest unit, but Gavin’s guitar was such genius that it concentrated the whole song and kept the audience in a dancing fury.

They had been playing all originals, but when Gavin saw Daniel, the band broke into a version of the Beatles’ “I’ve Got a Feeling,” arranged in a reggae/funk manner beyond description. It was then that Daniel found Luke. He was dancing alone. Luke was a person who was always completely comfortable being by himself, but he was also a great activist, a celebrity of sorts, and it was likely that half the crowd knew who he was. Luke had a robust figure, thick wide shoulders, black curly hair, and deep thoughtful eyes behind wire-rimmed glasses. They hugged strongly for a long time and then screamed words at each other, which neither heard. Daniel began dancing, first getting into the groove but soon moving to a feverish pitch. Luke looked at his friend and would have thought nothing unusual, except that Daniel seemed so intense, more than Luke could remember seeing.

The song ended, and a new one began. The pulsing of Marley’s “Exodus” seemed to have entered Daniel’s own heart, the two beating as one. Dent-da-dent-da-dent-da-den-den-dent.
“Open you eyes….and look within. Are you satisfied with the life you’re living?

We know where we’re going, we know where we’re from

We are leaving Babylon and going to our father’s land”

The words spoke directly to Daniel, and he had stopped dancing. He was going back to his native country, he was looking inside, scrutinizing his life, asking himself the most important questions; a thousand questions asked within a measure of the song; a thousand thoughts in the next measure; a thousand emotions in the next. It was building, building, a force. Then he stood still transfixed, in a trance.

Luke could see sweat pouring down Daniel’s face, his eyes as wide as could be, rolling back and fluttering. He began to breathe deeper and deeper, and Luke began to panic, feeling that Daniel was about to have a seizure or something. But the song ended, and Daniel came out of his trance as if nothing had happened. Luke said nothing to Daniel, but later he told Gavin and, even later, Rose what had happened. Daniel, meanwhile, realized that Rose was not present, and a pain shivered through his body. Why wasn’t she here? She was supposed to be here for Daniel, like he had always been there for her. Daniel was about to weep, until Gavin’s arms embraced him like a bear from behind, squeezing out the breath. Daniel forgot all his worries.

“So, Danny, what’s the big news you’ve been so secret about? What brings you out here, or better yet, why the hell haven’t you gotten out here before now?” Luke was asking. “Are you working for the CIA and that’s why you dropped off the
face of the earth? I haven’t heard from you for almost a year, and I actually called you on a number of occasions and wrote you a letter.”

Daniel laughed—Luke was the worst correspondent imaginable, and several times in the past, Daniel sent him letters with stamped return envelopes. “I know, sorry, I haven’t been keeping up with anyone much. Well, you’re not going to believe this, but I have a brother, in the Philippines, he wrote me a couple of months ago. I checked it out, and it’s legit, so I wrote him back.”

“That’s wild Danny. I take it you don’t remember having a brother?” Gavin asked.

“Yes and no. I mean, I certainly didn’t until I got the letter, but now I keep having these images….the thing is, I guess we’re twins, so the images I have look like me, when I was a kid.”


“I guess through the orphanage we lived at and my adoption agency. That stuff it all supposed to be confidential, but he said that in the Philippines you can find out anything if you pay for it,” Daniel answered.

“Yeah, but they would at best have your father’s contact info,” Luke pointed out, “and even that information would most likely be twenty-some years old.”

“I know, I thought of that. But you can find out just about anything on-line, even in a war-torn country like the Philippines.”

Luke opened his mouth to say something, but stopped. Gavin broke in:

“How long are you going to be there?”
“Two weeks. I fly into Manila, spend a day there and then fly to Cebu. That’s the island we were born on and where he still lives.”

“And then back to Boston?” Gavin asked.

“No. I decided to move. Everything I own is sitting at my father’s place in a backpack. I sold all my furniture, my dishes, my stereo, I didn’t own a TV...well, anyway, I sold it all. I’m thinking of moving back to the West Coast. Probably not the Bay Area; maybe Portland or Seattle...” Daniel fell silent. He felt as though he was monopolizing the discussion and wanted to hear about his friends.

The talk went on like this for some time, when they overheard a rumor that the band was not coming back on. Gavin confirmed it after returning to talk with the manager.

“They said two sets, and it’s not even midnight,” Gavin said, exasperated but resigned.

The crowd grew noisy as it became evident that this rumor was true. Suddenly, from across the room, a man shouted, “Sturm und Drang!” A silence fell across the room, followed by other voice shouting, “It’s OK. It’s OK. He’s just drunk. Just a joke.” Then after a moment, another voice called, “Not cool! Not cool at all!” This was followed by several curses being thrown out. Daniel saw two college students, dragging a very drunk man, who looked about with a confused and idiotic expression. Daniel turned to look at the others, all of whom had equally serious expressions.

“What was that all about?” Daniel asked.
No one in the group seemed to want to give Daniel an answer at first. Big John, whom Daniel had been introduced to and had been talking with for the last half hour, looked positively angry, contrasting greatly from his demeanor of just a second ago. Luke said that it was nothing, which seemed a ridiculous reply under the circumstances. Finally, Gavin spoke up:

“That guy was just an ass, that’s all. He screamed, “Sturm und Drang,” some German nonsense that these cult members scream when they blow themselves up.”


“What does?” Gavin asked.

“Sturm und Drang, it means storming and striving. It was an epicurean movement tending towards the nihilistic like Goethe’s Werther, and probably laid the groundwork for what Nietzsche’s philosophy was a reaction against.”

“And that’s supposed to mean…?” Gavin asked, tauntingly. It was an on-going joke that Luke often explained things as obscurely as possible.

“Wait, wait, so they just blow themselves up? What for, are they terrorists?” Daniel asked, trying to stay on the topic.

“I guess you could say that, but it’s a different type of fear they’re working on. They’ve never killed anyone other than themselves. In fact, they usually yell their slogan and wait for the place to clear before blowing themselves to smithereens.”

“Why, though? What’s their point?” Daniel asked. A very eerie feeling began to come over him.
“There is none,” Gavin said.

“There is,” Luke broke in. “They aren’t terrorists because they threaten other people’s lives or property. They terrorize you with a question.”

“Which is?” Daniel asked again.

“Same as Hamlet’s,” Luke answered, shrugging. “Except, they’re not really interested in metaphysics, and I doubt few of them have ever read Shakespeare. You know how evangelicals make that argument that human dignity is not derived from the quality of life, but is given by God? Well, I guess their statement is to reject that gift—that human dignity only comes when you are free from having to bow down in payment for something you didn’t ask for. It was discovered that the first few people to blow themselves up had truly horrible lives—you know, child abuse, rape, a penchant for masochism, whatever—but after that, it just became a fashion. Still, almost every one of them has been young, many street kids, many lost souls. But I fear it will spread because it has become so fashionable, and like all fashions it gets stupider by the minute.”

“How many have there been?”

“I don’t know, maybe six or seven in the Bay Area, but I’ve heard about them in other cities.”

Gavin suddenly frowned. “You mean you haven’t heard of them, the ‘Thustrates?’ How could you not have? Don’t you pay attention to the news at all?”

“That’s just what I was going to ask: how come I haven’t heard of this in the news. I thought I kept well informed, but...” Daniel answered. “No, it is impossible
that I missed something like this. Nothing about this has been in the news on the East Coast nor on the cable or National news. It simply hasn’t been reported.”

Daniel’s voice was very agitated as he said this, and for a moment he thought of Dr. Keene’s letter.

“Maybe their deaths are reported as something else. It’s not the type of thing news organizations would want to advertise. Nihilistic people don’t care much about the news,” Luke suggested.

“Well, you’ve heard of Daren Thustra, right?” Gavin asked. Daniel nodded he had. “He was the eccentric millionaire who gave all his money away. Supposedly, he created the first usable quantum computer and then sold it to the government. But no one has ever seen it, much less used it, so some people think it’s all a farce. Anyway, he wrote a note one day, sent it to all the major papers (though only a small paper out of Pacifica published it) and then committed suicide,”

“He was assassinated,” Luke insisted.

Gavin continued, “Well there are some conspiracy theorists and mad scientists who think so, but that note was authenticated, and in it he full claimed responsibility for his death. Well, he wrote a bunch of books and left instructions that they were to be published posthumously. Mostly futuristic sci-fi kind-of stuff, but supposedly they’re all allegorical political criticism. I read one and didn’t like it much.” Gavin stopped to pour himself a beer. He continued, “His books wouldn’t have attracted so much attention, if Thustra hadn’t killed himself. He jumped off a building into a newly laid sidewalk of fresh concrete—a rather extreme way of
ensuring your posterity. Afterwards, people began to imitate him. They say that he started a cult while he was still alive and that it’s his followers that are killing themselves.”

“I don’t agree. This is an on-going thing, and someone is driving it, organizing it. Remember, I organize rallies and protests all the time. I know when something is random and when it is not.”

“It would seem to be a rather short lived movement, if membership is to kill yourself for no reason. Not quite a recruitment tool.” Daniel noted.

“You would think so, but really there seems to be no end to the swelling of the ranks. Not everyone kills themselves, of course, there was a group of them at an anti-war rally last month, handing out fliers and stuff.”

“That reminds me,” Luke said. “There’s going to be a big march next Friday. I’ve helped organize it. Do you want to go?”


“Oh, yeah, count me in. Those things are a hoot.”

“What did that Thustra guy write?” Daniel asked.

“You should read one of his books, perhaps *The Fulcrum of Man.*” Luke said. “As always I disagree with Gavin, but you’ll have to see if you can make any sense of it.”

Daniel wanted to ask more, but he could sense that the discussion was over. The strangest thing was that Daniel had not said a word about what had happened to him that morning. The conversation turned to other things. Daniel had a chance to
talk Big John a little more, but soon he became quieter and finally withdrew from talking altogether. He felt the illness, which had first been overcome with caffeine and then with beer, slowly begin its final assault. Both Gavin and Luke noticed that Daniel’s quietness, but could tell little from it, having not seen their friend for quite some time.

They left the bar each going their separate ways, promising to meet tomorrow as soon as possible. Daniel headed deliberately in a direction that was not towards his own house. He walked down the street, which was unexceptional, though very dirty and most of the buildings looked run down. He came to the address he had memorized: Boethius’s address. It was a three-story gray building, presumably divided down the middle into apartments, as there were two gated stairwells leading up. No lights were on, even the stairs were dark. There was also a basement window, barred, from which a light shown, yet the window was so dirty it was impossible to see within. He didn’t know what he was expecting, but this was disappointing. All of the sudden he knew that he was going to vomit. His mouth and eyes watered, the world became blurry. No trace of the warmth he had been carrying remained. He saw that there was an alley on the side of the building and went towards it.

Finally, he could take it no longer and collapsed to his knees. He began heaving again and again. For a moment, some relief washed over him, but then he heard something strange. In his disorientation, he did not understand what it was at first. But as he crouched there in silence he distinctly heard a thud followed by a
muffled moan coming from the opposite end of the alley. There was the sound of a man choking and another voice, angry and threatening. Daniel looked up to see the silhouette of a man at the far end of the alley standing over and a large lump on the ground he assumed was another man. Daniel began to shout, “Hey, what the fuck is going on?”, but his sentence was drowned in a fresh wave of vomit. It felt as though he would turn his stomach inside out, so violent was he retching. He had caught the assailant’s attention but did not interrupt the assault. Even from where he was, Daniel could see that the man was kicking so hard that whoever was on the ground would probably be beaten to death. Such a brutal display disturbed Daniel to such a degree that even in his weakened condition, adrenaline rushed through him, he grew angry and stood up shouting.

“Get away from him! I said get the fuck away!”

The man turned to him this time. “This is none of your business. Just walk away and you won’t get hurt too.”

Daniel hesitated for a moment, as though some cold logic of self-preservation tried grapple with him. That split second of hesitation sparked the anger necessary for the task. He began to walk forcefully down the alley, and with this movement the man at the far end started to run at him. Daniel continued to walk forward, and when they met, Daniel caught the man with a lucky elbow that sent the man to his knees. A second lucky break occurred as Daniel slipped and by doing so took out the man’s legs as he stood up. The man came crashing over Daniel catching his head on pipe that stuck out of a building. Daniel got up and could see by the beam of a
streetlight that the attacker was white, with black hair, and of nearly giant proportions, but his observations were cut short. The man had already gotten up and landed an unbelievably quick succession of blows to Daniel’s head, knocking him nearly unconscious. Daniel lay on the ground, fading. Another rush of adrenaline raised him, and he caught the man’s cane before it hit the man on the ground. The man was clearly many times Daniel’s strength, but Daniel’s wrath at this injustice locked the cane as though in a vice. Daniel seized the moment to punch the man squarely in the nose, splitting it as well as his own knuckles. The attacker delivered one final blow and then began to walk back to his first prey. Suddenly, sirens could be heard close-by. The man ran down the alley, but before leaving he stooped over the figure on the ground. Daniel saw this and heard the sirens, but remembered no more of that night.
Chapter Two

“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” Matthew 7

Out of a filthy window, over looking a gateway, a pebble-filled courtyard, and a car parked on the opposite side of a small windy road, Gavin looked. He saw a Korean man sitting in the car talking on a cell phone; it was his manager from the foreign language school he taught here, in Taegu, South Korea. The man looked up, and the two seemed to have made eye contact. Gavin walked into the bathroom, the smell of all stages of processing a live bird into fried chicken came up through the drain pipe just next to the toilet which served the shower as well. When he had finished urinating, he flushed, washed his hands with a very coarse soap and grabbed the trash bag. He walked out and shoved it in two huge trash bags stuffed to bursting with everything a man accumulates in a month. That was the last time he cleaned at all, he was on a tidal schedule, but now he hurried down the stairs with both bags,
hoping very much not to run into anyone. He reached the bottom and opened the gate. The man was there.

“Mr. Doh. How strange to see you right outside my door, right as I open it, just inches away, and there you are.”

“Yes, Gavin, I hear there is a problem. You should be teaching now.”

“Veronica’s taking care of it, I hope. Look, I’m done—you’re ripping me off, three hundred thousand won last month, and today you were going to stick me with a group of four-year-olds as an exhibit of how well an American can hold their attention and teach for an hour. I can’t control those kids for ten minutes! Veronica and the other Korean teachers can’t even control them because they’re too young. I swear some of them are three. I’ve been with them for five months because I’m the only foreign teacher you feel safe putting together with twelve hyperactive three and four year olds in a cubicle-sized room, and now you want to make a few more bucks because you know I let them climb all over me, but I’m tellin’ ya it’s going backfire because these parents are paying a lot of money to see that their kids are learning English, and by age six they think they should be able to recite the Gettysburg Address. But I’m tellin’ ya, it ain’t going to happen; these kids are going to spend more time inspecting the size if my nose, which they believe is so big. I can be ripped off once or twice. I can be humiliated, but after ten months of this shit, you can’t do both on the same day and get away with it. I mean what the fuck am I doing here anyway, I got places to go.’ This last he said to himself, for it was quite clear
that his Korean counterpart had not understood anything he was saying and had long since stopped listening.

“Yes, so Gavin you go teach now,” Mr. Doh repeated hoping that the matter had been resolved merely through Gavin’s expulsion of air.

“No, I’m not going to teach now, I’m not going to teach for you again, I’m leaving. I’m not much of a teacher anyway.”

The last sentence Mr. Doh understood. “No, you’re a good teacher, the kids, they like you, they say you are the best, the nicest teacher.”

Gavin spoke, “That may be true being the only teacher to have no corporal punishment or angry yelling in my pedagogy. But then why’d you steal from me?”

Again, Mr. Doh acted as if this last accusation was the part of the language he didn’t understand. He began calling on his cell phone, Gavin angrily walked across the street to set down the garbage bags. They spilled out onto an already filthy street, but Gavin didn’t heed the waste. He turned to a cell phone being shoved in his face. On the line was a woman talking frantically but in much better English.

“Hello…Gavin..hello, are you there, Gavin?” The woman shouted.

“Yep, I’m here alright…”

Then ensued a conversation at least twenty minutes long, in which he mentioned at least twenty times that he had quit and was leaving and he didn’t want pay raises or to be switched classes, or anything. But the woman ignored him, as if all would be soothed over like a child after a temper tantrum. He was going. In his eyes he had been stolen from and insulted, unwanted in the country, unloved, though
not unwanted, in one way or another, by the women here, stared at and reviled on the streets. America had never been looked at too friendly by Korean eyes, even after the second world war. It was as if three vicious bears had been tearing at their tiger cub for the past century, and now the best it could present the cub with was a barb wired playpen with which to grow up in. The cub grew up fast, but that is not always the best way to grow up. Korea mimicked its paternal bear’s business habits so that no business transaction could be completed without a bribe, an extravagant, dinner or a debaucherous session of soju drinking, whoring, and naw-reh-bong singing. On the other side, Korea was still like an innocent child, like Gavin’s neighbors who greeted him with gifts and such enthusiasm each day that it never ceased taking by him surprise, or the children themselves who fifty in a row would either greet or mock him, depending on the flavor of the day, with ear shattering glee.

Gavin’s Korea began with a girl he was to go with changing her mind at the last moment. She was Australian and had been traveling for a year already, and upon returning home found that she could not venture out so soon again. Gavin was sure that this was the girl he was to marry, he loved her with all his heart, decided that no other woman would ever sway him despite his enormous passions, and they had worked relentlessly until they found a way that they could live and work together. That was by teaching in Korea and now less than a week when they would be reunited in Korea after a month’s absence, she backed out—not for a little while, but for good. It was over, his dreams of marriage, the man of a hundred girlfriends who
could be completely satisfied by one, and now that one no longer existed for him. He went anyway, into the country that was at once a teen torn too soon towards the torrid debaucheries of adulthood and youth of innocence, of indispensable energy, community and hope. Gavin’s students were beautiful, as are the faces of all children, but the young ones glowed with the light of unrestrained joy, intolerable impatience, unfettered impulses of life; the older ones wrestling with all the energy of a day pent-up from sitting rigidly straight-backed in hard chairs and now trying to stuff one more bit of information into their heads from a very large man, who was kind and gentle though not much of a “teacher” (he preferred fieldtrips to buy ice scream and trampolining with his classes where squatters had stretched springs to the never ending stream of testing for sign of improvement, which were doubtless, albeit mostly through osmosis). He was completely untrained, unleashed, uninvited and, on most days, unaccompanied as he wandered in the pine hills before his classes or through the gardens grown in the carcasses of ruined buildings by friendly poor squatters. He would swing his students in circles, or walk around with the young ones on his feet making them move like puppets, or riling the kids up by busting out break dancing moves. He taught from the book for ten minutes, maybe, threw it over his shoulder and then improvised entire lesson plans based on hangman and find-the-hidden-word dittos. The children loved him but did not respect him, for he was not stern or ordered for that matter. At times he’d try to teach hung-over to the point of delirium, but he would remain a peaceful bumbling giant, he had the heart of a child himself. And he would make up foolish games for them to play, or rap unintelligibly
in front of them, complete with beat-box, discuss the philosophies of PiKaChu, admire their well drawn sketches of piles of impossibly laid dung and robotic death machines, every now and then throw in a self-conceived lesson that invariably turned to chaos within fifteen minutes.

Then there was Korea outside of school where he drank and explored; he did both, as in all things, to the extreme. He fought his cigarette smoking by hiking the mountains and his growing alcoholism by working out incessantly at a gym where they played rave versions of Juice Newton songs at triple speed, and they were continuously curious about the weightlifting habits of Westerners. His apartment, much like his social life, fell to ruin and self-pity. There was a recycling truck that blared military march music from the 1920s or something to that effect, accompanied by a commanding voice that spoke neither rhyme nor reason to Gavin, but monotony, and he was quite sure that it would be this truck that would come to collect his soul while he was lying on his deathbed. There were mountains not far from his house, behind rows of domino-like apartment buildings—Wah-Rung-San, the Dragon Lies Down—and Gavin used to climb its sharp, scaled backbone to escape the visible sea of pollution and Sunday morning hangovers; one side rock quarries and endless rows of greenhouses, the other side was the enormity of two and a half-million souls packed into a catcher’s mitt. The markets with eels and sweltering slaughtered chickens over a sprinkling of ice, vats of boiling bug larvae to be popped like popcorn into children’s mouth, and more pungent smells that could be collected in an air raid shelter from a hundred schoolchildren after a kim-chi
festival. There was the kindly old man who sold him bottled water and other
groceries at half price without his knowledge because Gavin often wore torn clothes,
and therefore the man thought he was poor. There were his fellow Korean teachers,
so kind and motherly, like a row of sisters he loved and envied because they
surpassed him in teaching ability and language, all paid half his salary, and his class
of rich bored housewives who resented their male-dominated society, but resented
even more any criticism that Gavin would bring to the subject. The legless man
prostrate on a scooter one might slip under a car, the women in the windows made up
in bride’s dresses and yet sitting in solitude. The foreigners who forgot their
manners and failed to learn those of a new culture and those great travelers, who
welcomed the world and were welcomed by it, taking Gavin in like a lost brother,
who had been wounded on the hunt, restoring him time and again with their love and
mirth. The sprawling industrial mass, like vines creeping up the sides of the
mountains; the collapsing tunnels and buildings, the erection of twenty new ones in
their place. And the midnight walks trembling on the verge of the DTs, endlessly
marching to release the energy of one’s heart lest it burst, past the old woman’s box
heated with kerosene, who took money for the trampoline that Gavin bounced with
his classes on, past the giant theme park that hid the tiny brothels, past the young
men dancing furiously on video machines and practicing soju-enhanced tae-kwon-do
kicks on the Korean version of America’s Strongman carnival games, the tower, the
temple, the tombs that must have inspired Tolkein’s hobbits.
One day, Gavin was hitchhiking outside Kyoung-ju a city, or rather an ancient kingdom with the houses packed tightly like a Shilla fortress. He was picked up by a man in a jeep, Gavin misspoke the name of a near mountain and soon found himself being driven twenty miles into the hot muggy valleys. The man was an artist and a Buddhist and told Gavin that when he was young he had hid from the police on the mountain that Gavin had mentioned. He took Gavin up the mountain as far as he could and then let him go, first providing him with vitamin and fiber drinks. Gavin walked up the mountain path, a road, but barely in place. He found some people picnicking, and they greeted him energetically, even bringing him a beer. Further up the mountain there were wild goats feasting on the dense vegetation that grew on the sides of a stream that paralleled the road. There was a temple beside a bridge where one had to cross the stream and some rundown farmhouses that looked like home. On the top of the mountain, the forest was completely cleared, and there were huge fields of crops here and on all the surrounding mountains, islands in the clouds. That night he slept next to the stream where someone had lit candles in a Buddhist shrine that was stuck in the side of a cliff, and he decided to test his luck by sleeping under the stars, except it was cloudy, and he awoke around four in a fierce downpour. At first, he tried to huddle against the cliff, with some success because of an overhang, but eventually the stream began to rise rapidly, threatening his escape, so he packed up and crossed while he still could. He walked down the mountain, past the temple, and when crossing the stream once again, he realized how far he was from home and how no one would ever know
where he was if he were to die suddenly. He at last found the town that sat at the base of the mountain; it was a traditional village, representing Shilla architecture from a time that Korea was known to be the “hermit” kingdom. Exhausted, he took his pack off and climbed on a boulder that lay on the side of the now paved road. A tree grew out of a crack in the top and must have sent its roots through six feet of rock; thus, even though the tree looked like a juvenile, it was most likely decades old—far older than he. Though, it was only his second week in Korea, and his heartache was strong for the one who did not come, he gathered great comfort from this tree that was being lit by dawn’s light. He began walking again and was picked up by a man who drove a taxi in the city. The man refused payment, drove Gavin half way to the city and then, as he was not yet headed in himself, stayed to flag down a car to take Gavin the rest of the way. What a kind man, Gavin thought. Ten months later, while being yelled at through a cell phone, he would realize that this was his fondest memory of Korea.

The person at the other end of the cell phone seemed to have realized something as well—that Gavin was not bluffing, indeed he did not want more money or a better schedule, in fact, he wanted something that the school could not provide. Desperate, the woman got Gavin to agree to not leave, but stay until they could have face to face negotiations the next day. After so many promises had been broken to him, Gavin did not value his word to them greatly. When Mr. Doh left, Gavin immediately went back to apartment and began to pack. There were so many books that he had spent a great deal of time and money to acquire left behind because of the
rush; he took with him only his journal and a copy of *War and Peace*, which he had read three times while in Korea, and which would later fuel endless debates with Luke, when he returned home. But long before that, he would, while ransacking his own apartment, turn to look out the window and notice that Mr. Doh, who had just drove of a few minutes ago, was now again parked, a little farther down the street but well within sight. This, for some reason, did not surprise him, though it did give him the creeps. He had finished packing all of his clothes, several knickknacks and artifacts, things he had collected here, which later he would lose, his harmonicas and guitar, and so, he simply went down the stairs, into the courtyard and then took a sharp right and then another, running through an alley and opening out on the busy street behind his apartment, between the chicken shop and the butcher. Gavin walked hurriedly down this street despite the large pack, duffle bag and guitar he was carrying.

He made it to his friends’ house, Magic Dave and Darlene, who lived by the university, worked there also, and had given a great deal of solace to Gavin during his stay. They would remain in Korea for a while after, along with Corey, another true friend, and that evening the four of them would go back to Gavin’s apartment, to gather the books and several thousand won worth of change that lay strewn across his floor and remark on the absolute squalor that Gavin had been living in. Gavin surprised his friends with his announcement of leaving and his obvious intention to do just that, he dropped off his stuff, and went to change his plane ticket home, which had already been purchased but was not for another month. He was on a flight
to Seoul the next morning at five and then chased the dawn to Tokyo, before arriving 13 hours later in San Francisco.

Gavin had been living back in San Francisco for several weeks before Daniel arrived. A man of energy, he had already gotten together his band. Mohammed with his dreads, singing with sweet sister Sasha, a hip Latina, fronted the band. Tim was on the bass, and most of the time his brilliance exceeded Gavin’s though it was not as attention grabbing. Big John, a huge black man, without an ounce of fat, punished the drums until they sung like Bonzo or Moon.

On the night of Daniel’s arrival, just after they had departed, and Gavin had drained one pint too many, he set off down the street in the direction of Rose’s apartment, though he was barely conscious of it. The fresh air, walking briskly, and time began to sober Gavin up, though there were no outward signs of it yet. There was something else he had planned to do, something important. What was it? He was walking towards Rose’s he knew that now, but still could not remember why. Gavin walked down the street at a very uneasy pace, sometimes steadying himself slightly on a wall or a lamppost. He was what many considered to be a “good drunk,” he thought himself so, and therefore practiced his craft frequently and with humble dedication.

When drunk he could be funny, absurd, riotous, weepy or emotional, but most of all, obstinate, especially when trying to carry out an idea once it got into his head. Then he would assume a seriousness disposition and force of will that was far
more maniacal than his more elated moods. At the bar, he had felt something was odd with Daniel, who seemed quiet and distracted all night. He thought that it was Rose’s absence that had so distracted and bothered Daniel. He knew how much Daniel had been looking forward to seeing Rose and how crushed he was when she had not shown, though Daniel had not been overseas himself. Something was wrong with Daniel, and Gavin knew it. There was some urgency in this feeling, as though he had intuited only the tip of a much larger problem. In truth, he had cause to be suspicious before Daniel had even shown up at the bar. This was due to an ominous, yet exceptionally vague, conversation he had with Rose. Rose said Daniel had written her a letter that contained some “disturbing” phrases, but she wouldn’t say what these phrases were, which made Gavin suspicious that she was playing some game. So he was going to see her now, despite the lateness of the hour, to get everything straight.

With every step he grew steadier. The cool night air did much to revive him and he began to walk at a furious pace, though the long strides of his lanky body seemed fluent and natural. He was moving so fast that he didn’t see and nearly tripped over two people slumped against the side of a building. He was about to pass on by, when he did a double-take on the two huddled forms. They were both girls, looked to be in their early twenties and seemed out of place sprawled as they were on a sidewalk. They were dressed well, but not for the weather, and their clothes were very dirty. One of them was shaking, evidently in great pain, her eyes flickered, and her face would periodically distort as if she was being electrocuted. The other girl
was crying and stroking her friend’s hair. Her eyes were glazed and bloodshot, and when they found Gavin’s, they took a good deal of effort to focus. The twitching girl was very small, not over five feet, with short black hair highlighted purple, and a multitude of piercings spread across a beautiful, but deathly pale face. The other girl would have been much taller if she were standing, though she was extremely thin and probably weighed about the same as the smaller one. She had blond hair done up in pigtails and a thin face that was now streaked with a rainbow of running makeup. There were smears of dried blood on her upper lip and cheek; bruises pooled below her eyes and could be seen through the cosmetics. She was not as pretty as her friend, in fact, in her current state she looked rather bad, but at that moment, Gavin found this girl to hold some irresistible attraction. He wanted to know how this she came to be here and so strong was this impulse that he found it strange that he was about to pass by oblivious. He stayed where he was waiting calmly, as if certain the girl staring so intently at him would explain everything. In one long explosion of words, she did in a way.

“We had just arrived at some party, and she disappeared. I didn’t know anyone there so I was stuck talking to some creepy guy. A few minutes later I saw her rush down the stairs, and she just tore off down the street, and I lost her, but then I found her, and she started passing out. God, I hate this city. We only moved here two months ago and everything has gone wrong. My boyfriend, ex-boyfriend—fucking bastard—convinced me to move out here. He had already been here since last August, and I didn’t want to come, neither did Alicia, but I dragged her along.
And when I get here, he’s fucking some other chick, and he’s not even hiding it. Tells me to get out, if I don’t like it. He knows I spent all my money buying a car to come out here. So we stay, and things don’t go right for Alicia and I’m going out of my mind because I just moved to San Francisco to be part of this asshole’s harem, and then he crashes my car! We get in a fight, he throws me and his other girlfriend out, and she finally realizes what a creep he is. And Alicia, well she’s passed out during most of this, so I had to go back in to get her…” The blond girl began heaving like a child, accenting every other word. “And we’ve been staying with some people that we met, and they all hate us, they want us to leave…and now I don’t know what we’re going to do.”

Gavin looked down and asked, “Shouldn’t we get her to a hospital?”

“No!” the girl answered fearfully, her eyes widening like swelling tempests. One might have though he had suggested visiting a dungeon. “No! No, we can’t go there.”

“Why can’t you go there? What if she goes into a coma or something?”

“She’ll be fine. No hospital.”

As if in response, the sick girl grabbed her head and began shaking more violently. She got to her knees, crawled a few feet away, and began dry-heaving until she crumbled in exhaustion. The other girl went over and dragged her friend back, propping her up against the brick wall.

Gavin thought for a moment. “So, is this from taking something or from withdrawal?” he asked.
“Withdrawal, yes”

“From what?”

“From ‘The Blues’. She’d only been taking it for a month, even less. That’s why I know she’ll be OK. She was supposed to score at the party. Guess she didn’t.” The girl replied. She had stopped crying but remained in a tentative state that threatened collapse at any moment. Gavin looked at her hard, noticing more bruises on the girl’s left cheek and neck. His face made no indication of what he saw, but a thousand hypotheses began to race through his head.

“But you’re not going through…?” Gavin began.

“I don’t take that stuff.”

“And what do you take?”

“Moonshine.”

“Hmm…and you’re on it now? I can see by your eyes. But that won’t matter at a hospital, I mean, they can’t do anything to you. We should go, now. I’ll go with you, and it will be fine.” Gavin insisted,

“That’s not true, you don’t know, we will get in trouble. We have before. And it’s different now…” The girl’s expression grew distant, and she didn’t continue her sentence.

Gavin looked quizzically at the two of them, biting his lower lip and rubbing his jaw. “Her name is Alicia, right, what’s yours?”
“Inspiration Galoni. What’s yours?”

“Gavin, but that can’t be your name. Come on, what is it? If you want my help, you gotta be straight with me.”

“That is my name, Inspiration. It’s on my birth certificate, wherever the hell that is.”

Inspiration, after her initial outburst, now ironically seemed lacking in her namesake, and so Gavin nicknamed her Moonshine and Alicia—The Blues, for he fancied how these names sounded together, and he had a passion for personalizing everyone through a nickname. Moonshine attracted his curiosity, a craving to understand, while The Blues, who was now shivering, curled in the fetal position, invoked only pity. Moonshine stood up, and Gavin could see Caesarean scars on her exposed mid-riff. At every moment, this girl was unfolding like a mystery.

“Look, let me get a cab for you two.”

“Haven’t you been listening? There’s no place to go!”

“Oh, yeah.” He had sincerely forgotten. It took a moment to summon the necessary concentration, and during this time he continued to gawk rather stupidly at her.

Moonshine snapped at Gavin. “Look, just go on, OK. Get out of here! What do you care if she goes into a coma? She knew the risks, right? And it’s my fault I’ve got nowhere to go. I was so stupid. So you can go to hell, but you can’t just stand there lookin’ down your nose at me.” Her face had turned spiteful, and her fists were clenched at her side.
Gavin shrugged and said, “I’ll be back soon” in a soft voice that was interrupted by a hiccup. He walked with great care and little balance over The Blues, who was now lying flat on the concrete, and then hurried down the street.

Two new drugs had hit the streets last few years. Both drugs had been developed by pharmaceutical companies for legitimate medical purposes—specifically to counter severe pain and depression—and both were considered exceptionally effective when prescribed acutely to combat the conditions for which they were intended, but the Blues was a highly addictive synthetic opiate, and Moonshine was an amphetamine, used for ADHD, but giving rushes of ecstasy with hallucinogenic properties when taken at higher doses. Within a year of coming on the market, they had become the two most popularly prescribed drugs in the country. At this volume, they soon hit the streets, and with black market production, an epidemic was predicted well after one had already begun.

Both were real street drugs; meaning they were cheap, highly addictive, and super abundant; first hitting the ghettos and poor rural areas, then, spreading to the suburbs and small towns. While the Blues competed for the attention of heroine addicts, Moonshine went far beyond speed freaks, cornering whole new markets and minds. It could keep people up for days without requiring food, sometimes giving people bursts of creative energy, and thus becoming mythic as the new drug of choice of musicians, artists, and other celebrities. As no one had ever died from Moonshine, it was considered physiologically safe, but people had been known to go into manias, with nightmarish hallucinations, and some chemically inclined slipped
right into insanity. It was ironic, or perhaps not really, that the emergence of these two drugs had concurred with an administration that prided itself on the “War on drugs,” much as crack exploded during the Reagan presidency, every action having a reaction and usually not the one intended. Gavin had tried both drugs once, felt the strength of both their allure, and for that reason never tried either again. Gavin knew his personality and was aware of his drinking problem. He fought it and then was beaten back by it. He saw no need to add to the list of his vices and problems. However, he had known habitual users of both drugs and was at least aware of the current folklore on how to handle those going through withdrawal.

Gavin was back in less than three minutes with a gallon jug of orange juice and a liter bottle of vodka. He opened the jug up, chugged about a third of the jug of juice, and then poured in the vodka. He took a large draught of vodka for himself and a slug of the mixture to chase it and then emptied the rest of the bottle, so that it came up to the very brim of the jug. He slammed back down the plastic top and shook it up, then he handed it to Moonshine. The girl on the ground (The Blues) was still shaking, but she was sitting up by her own strength and speaking.

“If I go to sleep, I know I’ll wake up crazy, I know I will. Or I’ll just die. Don’t let me go to sleep. I don’t care what you do, don’t let me sleep. Oh God, but I want to sleep so I can forget this pain.” While she talked, she held her head in her hand, she tugged at her hair and rocked back and forth.
“Here, have her drink some of this. Take it slow and stretch it out until the morning and don’t let her drink it all. There’s plenty for both of you.” As Gavin spoke, he looked at his watch which he kept on his belt-loop.

He took off to the store again and was soon back with two large bottles of water and loads of salty chips and crackers. He sat down with the girls but didn’t speak or urge the girls to do so. He sat very close to Moonshine, and she began to lean on him slightly, just the way a cat might lean against you when in need of contact. They passed around the jug wordlessly. Gavin tried to figure out what he was going to do and was worrying that he would soon be too drunk to do much of anything. *Ah, he had drunk too much again and forgot his initial task.* He got up suddenly.

“You’re not going to leave, are you?” Moonshine asked passing the jug to her friend. The Blues took it and chugged as much of the mixture as Gavin had the straight juice. She gasped but some color came rushing back to her face.

Gavin was watching with an impressed look. “Yeah, I have to go. It looks like your friend will be fine. Oh, here…” He took from his sweatshirt pockets some chips, a packet of chocolate covered donuts, and a saltshaker. “I heard that salt is good for coming down. And make sure she gets lots of water. Here’s a few bucks too.”

Gavin had given away his last dollar, but he looked especially pleased, the flush of the vodka was obviously having its effect. When it came time to leave, however, it struck him that nothing had necessarily been solved, he just put a patch
on it. The Blues would not go into a hypertensive coma, but she would wake up on the street with a crushing hangover and then spend the entire day searching for something that she did not have the money to buy. It would only be a matter of time until she would be back in this same condition. But that was her business; he had his own things to take care of. Besides, he did not believe very much of what Moonshine had said and not believing her to be a completely innocent victim in all of this, as she suggested. He struggled with this.

“No, you’ve got to stay. You can save us. You can’t abandon us now. You’ll stay with us, I know it.” Moonshine was glowing with as much hope as she previously had despair.

Finally, Gavin looked at the two of them and found that Moonshine did indeed inspire him. He said he would be back in an hour, maybe less, to get them, and they could stay at his place tonight and as long as they needed to, but he couldn’t bring them with him now.

“Stay right here, don’t move. I’ll be back within an hour, and you can come with me. I’m straight up, I don’t want anything from you just to help.” Gavin said this with the utmost truth. He was a friend of Daniel’s, and like Daniel he gave selflessly. The difference being that Gavin was so often out of control himself that the help he tried to provide was often muddle-headed and not quite appropriate. His intentions were good, but we know that intentions are not enough.

The Blues, who was now drunk, but fully conscious and calm, stood up with a silly grin and wordlessly gave Gavin a hug. Moonshine seemed pacified, but again
looked as if she might cry again. To forestall this, and because it was very cold, Gavin took off his sweatshirt, his favorite “hoodie,” and wrapped it around her as, she too gave him a hug good-bye.

“Again, wait here, I’ll be back in an hour.” And with that, he left.

It was almost one when he reached Rose’s place. He knocked hard and without hesitation. A young girl, with long black hair dyed, at the ends, dazzling red, and dark shaded eyes answered the door. She was thin but not overly so, as the last time Gavin saw her, and he remarked that she had gained a considerable amount of weight in a short time. She also looked like she was making a serious attempt at being Goth, while less than a month ago, Gavin had seen her in tie-dye and braids.

“Hey Freya, is your sister home?” he said.

“She’s asleep,” Freya replied.

“Well, wake her up and ask if she wants to see me. If she doesn’t, I’ll go.”

Freya was more than happy to do so. She had a crush on Gavin and had seen him a couple times before. Rose had noticed and gave her a lecture on Gavin’s shortcomings, but this only heightened the crush. She had already learned that when people speak behind someone’s back, it is almost always for a self-serving purpose. She felt that there was something mysterious, but very real, about the tension between Gavin and her sister. This was something to find out. Gavin was standing in the living room when she came back.
“She’ll be out in a second. That’s pretty good, to get her up, Rose wouldn’t do it for just anyone…not even me,” Freya said, smiling coquettishly. Gavin was oblivious and was eagerly studying the wallpaper which had pictures of pirate ships raiding one another in gruesome detail. The pattern was so bizarre that he could barely take his eyes off of it.

“What put up this wallpaper?”

“I don’t know. Rose likes it though, I think it’s creepy. You want something to drink?” Freya asked.

“Beer, if you got it. No, actually, just water.” Gavin replied, realizing that he would later need his consciousness, and he was just about at the brink.

Freya came back with holding a glass of water. When she walked in, Gavin finally ran his eyes over her. It was reaction for him, as basic to him as breathing, that if a girl was even semi-good looking, he would have to give her a thorough appraisal. In a moment, Rose came out in some loose pajamas, and Gavin studied her as well. It was remarkable that she looked nothing like her sister. She was better looking, but she wore a severe expression and the multitude of tattoos covering her body, peeking out from the confines of her pajamas, gave the impression of a tougher woman.

“What’s up?” She said in a raspy voice.

“Well, first of all, where were you? You knew how much it meant to Daniel to finally see you? Are playing games with my boy? Don’t you do him wrong after all he’s done for you.”
Rose frowned, but tears came to her eyes at the same time. It was clear that she knew she had hurt Daniel and that hurting him was the farthest thing from what she had wanted. “Gavin, why d’you got be like that?” Rose’s eyes flashed towards Freya, who blushed and then slid from the room without a sound.

“Like what?” he replied. Then he followed Rose’s eyes, saw Freya’s departure, and an understanding look came into his face. “Tracking down Freya?” Gavin mouthed, and Rose, with the look of an exhausted mother, nodded.

“Sorry. I was jumping to conclusions. This was going to be the first time,” Gavin said.

“I know, I know,” Rose said tears now rolling.

“Hey take it easy. I understand and if anyone else would, it will be Danny. He’d want you to take care of your sister first. You did the right thing, I’m just drunk and not thinking straight. Why’s this the first again?”

“You have asked me, like a million times, and I’ve explained it as many.”

“Oh yeah—purity.” Gavin returned with a stupid grin.

“So, Daniel wrote me a letter, I guess almost two months ago. He thought I was still in Seattle and was going to come through on his way to the Philippines. It was the most bizarre thing I’ve ever read, he was talking about these visions he’s been having, and his insomnia is getting really bad, and these nightmares he gets when he’s awake or asleep. I think he’s having a breakdown.”

“Danny’s one of the sanest people I know. He’s not going to go crazy. He was a little off tonight, but you should hear what he’s been through, just in the last
few days. He only scratched the surface. How bad could he be?” Gavin was doing his best to let Rose know that he had little confidence in her, he could be jerk at times.

“Here, read it for yourself,” Rose said, shoving the letter into his hand.

Gavin read the letter slowly, shaking his head, and then reread it. “Why did he write you and not me?”

“Perhaps because he’ll never shake that initial feeling he got for me. I’m the one he turns to when he needs help but doesn’t want to admit it,” she said flatly, though clearly she regarded this as a truth and a victory.

“He said tonight that he was going to the Philippines. He’s got a…” Gavin had stopped pacing.

“Twin. Yeah, I know. He wrote about it in his letter. The guy wrote him, and Daniel checked it out with his adoption agency and sure enough, he had a brother. Isn’t that fucked up? Could you imagine being separated from your sibling and then losing track forever. Daniel swears he can’t remember. Anyway, I think you should go with him.”

“To the Philippines? Why don’t you go with him, if you feel he needs to be saved or protected from himself?”

“Gavin, sometimes you can be so selfish. I have enough to look after here.”

Not understanding, Gavin replied, “Your whole relationship with him is selfish in that neither of you want the burden of facing each other and having to fall in love.”
“You know, fuck you, Gavin! You try and paint me as one-dimensional. I care just as much about him, I just care as a friend, which I thought you and I were also.”

There was a moment of silence and then, “I’m sorry Rose, I was being a dick. Really, we are friends. Well, I hadn’t thought about it…but, if you think he’s that bad off, maybe I should. Ok, I’ll go with him.” This, of course, was a lie. He had come to Rose’s house with this idea in his mind—at he would go to the Philippines. It was one of Gavin’s quirks that he would sometimes lie for expediency, sometimes to make whoever he had been talking to feel like they had affected his decisions, and sometimes he lied for reasons he did not himself understand. In his drunkenness, he did not know why he lied, but he understood that now that he had verbalized this idea, he was by nature committed. How amorphous he was!

“Good, go with him Gavin, just to see if he’s OK. And don’t forget to tell him that I’ll see him as soon as I can. Hopefully, tomorrow, I’ll call. I gotta get some sleep, so good night.” She walked over and gave Gavin a most unexpected kiss on the cheek and then went off to bed, unconcerned about whether her visitor left or stayed standing there. Gavin went off quietly.

On his way home, he stopped back to find the girls. He was disappointed to discover that they were nowhere to be found. He walked around the block and the few adjacent blocks, in a panic. Where were they? He felt crushed, like he had let those poor girls down. This was troubling but made his life easier. Nevertheless, he
took some time to walk around the neighboring blocks. He didn’t find them. At last, he trudged home to bed with a deeply lonely feeling in his chest.
Chapter Three

“Ask and it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are sinful, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 7

One day, when Daniel was still in his last year of high school, he received a phone call from a number he did not recognize. On the line was a hysterical girl, a teenager by the sound of her voice, sobbing and telling an incomprehensible story. Daniel was not put off a bit but instead began to talk to the girl in a soothing tone, telling her that he would help, but that she must calm down and explain her situation to him. The girl did calm down, and Daniel soon found out that she was a twelve year-old runaway, and her name was Rose. Rose told Daniel things that night, horrors that she had not told anyone, but now she was free, alone, and scared. Daniel believed the girl implicitly; he could hear in her voice that everything that she spoke was true, and it agonized him so that his heart felt pierced by thorns, and he began to silently weep.
He had received the call while walking home from school with Luke and Gavin. But as the call captivated Daniel’s attention, his young friends went on ahead, absorbed in some ludicrous debate, not noticing Daniel’s absence. Daniel went immediately to a Western Union and wired Rose, who was calling from St. Louis, much of what he had made painting the previous summer, saving only $100 for himself and then felt guilty for not sending that too. The compulsion to give was so strong in Daniel that, at times, it was almost an illness, for he would deplete himself so completely as to incapacitate himself. They talked for several hours that night, and Daniel did his best to try to convince Rose to come to live in San Francisco with him and his father, but Rose would not have it. She was suspicious of anyone ever having authority over her again.

That is the problem with anyone who has been abused, neglected, or otherwise emotionally traumatized as a child; they may never again trust in anyone in the world. They have been betrayed, and so in turn they begin to lie. When they are caught in their lies, it is shoved in their face, rather than getting to the bottom of why they are lying and how to help them. When a child, or even an adult, feels that he or she is labeled as being “bad,” as if a certain action or series of actions defines the entirety of their being, they will either: accept the label and feel bad about themselves, or they will flee, escaping all who would label them. They may isolate themselves or keep only the most tenuous of relationships, always protecting and sheltering their souls by never letting it be tethered. This is a two edged sword because then the person will not have deep meaningful relationships. They may not
ask for help when they need it or may reject in part what help is given. Such was the case with Rose. Daniel would get calls from her, often just to talk, but he could never be sure where she was, what she was doing, who she was with, or if she was alone. He tried at first to weave a story of reality but then realized that there were only perceptions and yarns, a kaleidoscope of a life that Daniel tried desperately to bring peace to. It was five years before Rose allowed herself to be taken in by a wonderful African American couple who had brought in and up over twenty other runaways.

During the five years that Rose was on the road, Daniel often he sent her money or bought her bus tickets, which were supposed to bring her closer to San Francisco, but really took her all over the country. Daniel knew that he was paying debts created by others, but the second that he heard that voice, he was in love. It is true that this initial love was like that of a brother upon finding his little sister wronged and stranded, but later, after college, Daniel began to feel much more for a girl that he never met. It was strange, at first, then during college, it became a symbol of purity in an impure world that he would simply be there to help someone and never ask a thing in return. I suppose he felt a sense of pride in this, but if one is to be proud of anything, helping people is a pretty good thing. It felt good and sustained him, though he was dragged through Rose’s romances and was called upon in most of the low moments of Rose’s life, he became stronger and better for the friend that he was being. How many times he longed to go and find her, but resisted out of devotion to an idea!
This was to change, for now he did need her and, as they were now in the same city, there was no longer cause to continue without her. It did not even occur to Daniel that Rose might not burn with the same intensity as he, and when he didn’t find her at the bar, he would have been absolutely devastated if Luke and Gavin had not been there to keep up his spirits and keep him focused.

Now, still stuck in the “hospital” or jail (now being both the same), he resolved to see Rose at once, which made his waiting even more painful. To pass the time, he asked the guards for a pen and some paper, and the guards, thinking Daniel would write something useful to them, complied. Daniel instead decided to write a history of Rose and the lost years that he first knew her, yet really knew nothing about. This is the story that Daniel wrote:

Rose had just about finished nailing her “Proclamation” to the door when she nearly got herself trapped. She had hammered the nail not just through wood and paper, but also flesh, blood, and cloth. The cloth was from a glove she had made for herself, since there were not many gloves made to fit her. She was special in many ways. Rose was born with six fingers on each hand, perfectly usable, nimble and cute- and can you imagine that her father had wanted the extra fingers removed! Luckily, her mother would have nothing to do with it, and the fingers stayed. It was the first and perhaps only time Rose’s mother stood up for her, but it was more fortunate than anyone in the hospital could have guessed, for those hands would one
day help to reshape the world for the better, and an extra digit can be quite useful in certain situations.

It was this sixth finger that had been nicked when she was posting her Proclamation. Similar to a man she had read about in her school’s library, her intent was to reform her home and to threaten to leave if her parents were unmovable. She had very little faith that anything would change, yet she was going to give it one more shot, and if that didn’t work—well, then she would be on her way.

Unfortunately, you can’t very well leave if your hand is nailed to a door, so with tremendous effort, she wiggled her hand out of glove and took off running. Blood trickled from her wounded finger, but she felt no pain. Rose was an exceptionally tough girl. She lost the other glove along the way, until finally she came out from the alleyway on to the street where her white hands met the sunlight for the first time in almost twelve years. Her mother had demanded, for some unknown and ridiculous reason, that Rose wear gloves because “no one looks too closely at your hands when you have them covered”. Rose could never understand what that meant, but she liked her bare hands now, and they were almost shimmering in the light. Their softness contrasted so sharply with the rough environment surrounding her.

She looked about. The streets were dirty, brown paper bags floated by like tumble weeds, crows viciously fought with pigeons over the carcass of a submarine sandwich, and everywhere there were people yelling at one another, cars honking, bells dinging, machines grinding, speakers announcing, feet stomping, babies crying.
and worst of all—the sound Rose could hear most clearly—hearts breaking. Yes, Rose could hear that well—did I not tell you she was an exceptional girl?

She posted a vigil on the stoop of the old library, now closed, which afforded Rose not only a clear view of her house at the end of the alley, but also some company. It was not the type of company that a girl of thirteen should want or would be safe with, but in this one case she just happened to luck out. Even a girl with no luck has the dice rolled in her favor every now and then. Her companions were two homeless men, good men, but a bit chewed up by the world and then sloshed around in a mouth of self-destruction before being spit back onto the street. They were surprisingly quiet (much more than her parents), un-intrusive, and just a bit smelly. Rose sat and slept in the center of the library’s doorway, under a magnificent arch upon which a stone owl had perched. To her left there was Sloppy Joe, who was gone most of the day and returned to personally fumigate the stoop as he slept. After the second night, when he noticed Rose was staying there, he came back with a sandwich and some fruit, which he gave to her wordlessly. From then on he would always bring Rose something to eat. On Rose’s right, she had altogether a different sort of companion. This was Harry, a bear of a man and very kind and very clumsy. Harry told Rose that he had lost his marbles, or at least some of them. Harry showed Rose the remaining marbles that he kept in a black velvet bag. They were a pitiful bunch, and Rose hoped that he would soon find better ones, but she was pretty sure that Harry’s problems had little to do with marbles.
She had met Sloppy Joe on the first day of her vigil as he was walking past her house on the other side of the street. He nodded to her with a sleepy smile, revealing a rotten grove of teeth. But his smile was true enough, meaning that he meant it.

“Is this doorstoop over here occupied?” he asked, pointing a thumb behind him.

“No, sir, I don’t believe it is,” Rose replied.

“Do people come true der, you know, often? I mean do people walk up those steps a lot and into that house.”

“No, I think only one person lives there now.”

“A building that big! Naw, ya joking.”

“Really, sir, there were once a lot of families who lived there, but there was a fire, and I think only one room was saved or something.”

“Well, that fella you was talking about, he nice?”

“Well, he looks around a lot when he comes home, like he’s a spy, but he’s not, and I once saw him hyperventilating into a brown paper bag, like the kind you get on planes, except those you barf into, but the guy, yeah, he’s alright.”

Sloppy Joe cracked a big smile and he was chuckling to himself. “You know, you’re alright too…heh, heh. Well, if you don’t mind, I sure would like some of that stoop. It looks amighty comfortable.”

“Then you should have it. I’ll move over so that you can be covered when it rains.”
“You have a good evening, mam. I think I’m going to catch me a nap.”

And with that Sloppy crossed the street lay down on the fourth step, not the fifth, final landing, where there was much more room. Rose talked to him the next day, and he told her he was just passing through, but as he had made little progress by the fourth day, Rose brought him a blanket, which he thanked her warmly for.

Rose took a break from her vigil to buy Harry some new marbles, and he was genuinely delighted, but somehow it did not make up for the marbles he had lost. However, in return, Harry promised to protect Rose from the vampires that frequently passed by and sometimes aggressively swooped in, only to be met with Harry’s huge paw. Bears generally got the better of vampires.

Rose was unsurprised when the first day passed without them noticing either the parchment nailed to their door or Rose’s absence. They had not heard the hammering over their shouting, and Rose’s sharp chirp when she hit her finger was drowned out by a certain Margarita singing loudly in a blender. Then the week passed without anything happening until Thursday when Rose’s father final read the letter. Rose’s father was always in a hurry. He had passed the nailed Proclamation at least a half a dozen times before he took the time to read it, but when he did his glasses did not seem to work for he kept moving them between his eyes and parchment, as if trying to bring the writing in focus. This annoyed Rose when she saw this because she knew her writing was just fine and very legible. Her father went in the house shaking his head, not even turning around to see Rose gazing in the distance. Her mother never came out at all. She was probably cleaning the walls
with a toothbrush—a favorite pastime. On the seventh day there was a thunderstorm and the Proclamation was ruined forever. Rose’s demands, simple as they were, had not been met. They had read:

“As Occupant of this house I feel I must make these demands or leave!

1) My name is Rose. You gave it to me but seem to have forgotten it. When I am hungry you should feed me, when I am hurt you should help me, when I am lost you should find me. I am lost now, so find me.

2) We are a family. Families talk, they do not yell. Family members want the best for each other, not just for themselves.

3) I have friends, and I love them. Someday I want to bring them home.

4) We have neighbors. To you they are tenants, to me they could be friends, if only they didn’t have to come and go so quickly. You should make it easier for them to stay.

5) The alley that leads to our house is disgusting. Buy me trash bags, brooms, and paints, and I will make it beautiful.

6) We need to make a plan for what we are going to do next to make our lives better, to grow happier, to be better people, because there is always tomorrow.”

These six demands, profound as they are for a thirteen-year-old, were written with a heavy sadness and with even greater sadness they were ignored, so that on the seventh day Rose gave up her vigil, and with tears, pulled hair, and reddened cheeks
she started on the adventure which became known as the **Sojourn of the Six Fingers**.

Sloppy Joe and Harry weren’t much of traveling companions, but Sloppy packed Rose a lunch, and Harry sent a growl out amongst the covens of vampires that Rose was not to be touched, she would have safe passage in the underworld which she was now to travel. Still, she was on her own and didn’t really know where she meant to go. She could certainly stay with friends, even live with them, but then she could not be sure that their homes were any different—besides, if there was one thing Rose meant to be, it was independent. Harry, in a rare lucid moment remembered that he had hibernated one winter in a place called Lonersville, somewhere in Northern California. Lonersville, as Harry described it, was something like an Ewok village, except that all the Ewoks were hermits who would have little to do with one another. Harry had lived in a tree stump, so did everyone else in the town, and, of course, everyone lived alone. Harry couldn’t remember much else, but Rose decided then and there that she was going to find Lonersville and set herself up in a nice cozy redwood stump. Rose said goodbye to Sloppy, but he was already snoring, and then she said goodbye to Harry, who gave her a bear hug. She turned to walk away, though not before looking at the house she had grown up in. She closed her eyes tight and tried to remember a happy time in that house, but she closed them too tightly and a tear squeezed out.
Lonersville was a very quiet place, so different from the city. Rose had some
difficulty finding it because everyone knew where it was rumored to be, but no one
had been there. Harry had taken up a collection to get Rose a bus ticket, and the bus
driver dropped her off in the town he thought was closest to Lonersville. Seeing that
she had no money or food, the driver tried to make Rose take a few bills, but she
refused. Still, he was able to slip the money in her backpack and subtly letting her
know he had done so, so that she would not use it. Rose bowed her head to him in
thanks. He was a very good man, and he had a daughter about Rose’s age that he
worried over his long drives.

Rose was glad to be off the bus for it had been getting stinky and hot, despite the
open windows. Moreover, there was a man sitting on the opposite side, a few seat
back, dressed completely in black, with many layers and shades. He first drew
Rose’s attention because she had always assumed that there was only one shade of
black, but here she could clearly see that there was a charcoal black, a dusty black, a
smudged black, like a poorly cleaned up ink spill, and so on. She would have begun
wondering if there were just as many shades of white, for Rose was a very smart and
curious girl, but once the man had caught her eye, a shiver went up her spine; he
was, in a word, creepy! His face was covered by the collar of a trench coat, and his
straight black hair tumbled over his forehead so that only the narrowest slit of his
eyes were exposed, yet they stared with a frightening intensity. Rose did not see that
this shadow of a man had slipped off the bus at the same spot as she and had quickly
disappeared through some bushes that lined the street.
Rose knew that she needed directions and possibly help to find Lonersville, but she didn’t like that prospect at all. Somehow, she felt OK receiving food and help from Sloppy and Harry, but in the wider world things seemed different and more dangerous. Rose had heard from somewhere that you should never to talk to strangers or take anything from them. However, under the change of circumstances, she realized that would now be impossible, if she were to survive. Some strangers might be nice, but some were very bad, and you don’t get a second chance with these people. So Rose had to think of a test, one that was very accurate, which unfortunately meant that it was very expensive as knowledge, especially knowledge about understanding people comes at a high price. The test Rose devised is as follows:

While waiting for a bus or a long stop light Rose would drop a dollar bill next to someone and pretend not to notice. The person would see the bill because Rose would get their attention by coughing or having a very loud hiccup. Then she would wait to see what happened next. Did the person take the bill or return it? A bad person would see the dollar, pick it up, and put it in his pocket. It was funny all the ways they would do it—some would grab it quickly, as if the dollar were bread, and they were starving, some would wait a minute and then slyly slip it in their pocket, some would even ask her if it was hers, and as she went to check her change purse, they would like and say, “…oh..heh heh, nope, guess it was mine...heh heh,” and then shove the bill into a bursting wallet. But some people would give back they money, and Rose knew she could trust them—only in certain situations though, and
she was too young to know what those situations were. Rose was, after all, smart enough to know what she didn’t know. Then there was the third group of people, who would not only bring her attention to what she dropped and insist that she take the money, but they would also give her something extra, another dollar perhaps or a toy, sometimes food, and sometimes just a smile or kind word. Once, she got a neat flip-top mirror, so she could see around corners and once, she got a camera that made instant photographs, but she never used it because she didn’t want to use the film until she saw something worth taking a picture of. Besides these occasional gifts, it was an expensive game, and she would always come home broke, but what she learned about people was priceless. Once she played all day with twenty one dollar bills that she had been saving all year, plus a fiver she had got as her only present on her birthday, which she got change for at her favorite store,…**AND**, Ms. Warner, knowing that it was her birthday, gave her a free coke and an apple. But in the end, she went home with nothing but a lot of interesting thoughts; she was a student of the world. Now Rose knew that she had to put her learning to the test.

Much of the townspeople were gathered in the central plaza for a farmers market, and the noise drew Rose to that location. There was a band playing and a few long-haired people dancing with their children. Around the square there were different booths selling fresh produce, honey, and crafts, and informing the public about this or that outrage and concern. There were jugglers, and Rose produced her devil sticks (a sort of juggling device) with which she performed a most elegant ballet, perfectly fluid and timed to the music as though she were a paid dancer. Her
grace and skill were so remarkable that very shortly a circle of observers formed around her though she was oblivious, lost in a trance of whirling motion. Rose stopped for a moment and then found a dollar that the bus driver had shoved in her pack. She took the dollar, laid it on the ground, and then began to tumble and twirl with her sticks, dazzling everyone watching. Soon other people began to put dollars where Rose had placed hers. The music played, and Rose continued her dance. While this was going on, the pile of money grew and shrank, grew and shrank, and then grew, as people put money down or took money on the sly. Nobody paid much attention to the money, though, for all eyes were fixed on Rose. It was her day in the sun.

About two o’clock, the music stopped, and the people began packing up their wares. Rose looked and saw that the pile of money had grown to almost fifty dollars—more money than she ever had in her life. Then she did one of those things that made Rose so special. She gathered up the money and yelled at the top of her lungs, “Anyone who is hungry, lunch is on me!!!”

And with that she found that she had nearly thirty hungry mouths to feed. They came over to her with wonder in their eyes—How was this young girl going to feed all these people? Rose wondered for a moment herself, then she thought, and soon she began speaking to the crowd of hungry people.

“OK, I need a lieutenant that can be trusted.” Rose said.

A man stepped forward with shaggy red hair. He was young and said his name was J, simply the letter, and that he’d be honored to be her lieutenant and
would make sure that all the money went to getting lunch. Rose looked at J and saw that he was an honest man (for Rose could catch anyone in a lie) so she gave him the money and told him the plan:

“We’ll have chili with bread and lemonade to drink. Now take….”

She gave directions on what to buy and when she mentioned beans, someone began a tune that went, “Beans, Beans, the magical fruit….” Rose was tickled by the song and made everyone sing it together in a chorus, which brought lots of laughs and made everyone forget that they were so hungry. Some people from the farmers’ market donated a big pot and a kerosene stove to cook on. They stayed around to help cook, for they had never seen a girl who could actually feed the hungry like this. It was so remarkable, they just wanted to be part of it.

The Chili Luncheon fed everyone so well that there was no room for dinner. The people all thanked Rose and swore they never had such good chili, as they began to disperse their separate ways. Rose had a good time; in fact, she thought it was the best day of her life up until then and said to herself that she should do this more often. However, Rose suddenly realized that she had let the whole day pass without asking anyone where Lonersville was. This was very unsettling for she had no idea where she would sleep or where she would go next.

“Could I help you, Rose?” J asked. This startled Rose for she had forgotten that he had stayed behind.

“Oh, hey J.” Rose paused for a moment and, looking doubtful, said, “Well, I guess you could. Do you know where Lonersville is?”
J cringed a little, but tried not to let Rose see it. “Yeah, I do, but why do you want to go there? We’re going to have a campfire by the railroad tracks and…”

“Oh, but I must get to Lonersville. I said I would, and I do what I say.”

“Who would extract such a promise from you?” J asked with concern.

“J, not everything that comes out of your mouth needs to be a promise for you to make it true,” Rose replied, and J did not doubt what she said, even though he did not quite understand her. Suddenly, J brightened up.

“I’ll show you the way.” He said. “I’ve been there before, and, although I think I know the way back, I don’t think I could explain it for some reason.”

Rose giggled a little. “Why J, I do believe you’re trying to trick me into taking you along with me.”

J looked crushed, and this surprised Rose as she was just kidding with him. He murmured in a pitifully quivering voice, like one on the verge of tears, “You do believe I can help, don’t you?”

“Of course, I do J. Look at what a help you’ve been already. We couldn’t have done that lunch without you,” Rose replied.

“It’s only since you came. I’ve been only helping myself for so long that I didn’t think I remembered how.”

“You obviously remember quite well.”

Rose had noticed something very peculiar happening with J— he seemed to be growing younger before her eyes. When she first met him, she would have instinctively applied the appellation “Mister,” despite not being able to pin down his
age. He had seemed to have graying streaks in his wild red hair, and she could
distinctively remember his face being wrinkled and creased, but now stood before
her a youth, barely a boy, with smooth skin and vibrant, feverish eyes. His actions
seemed to have become somewhat childlike, with the terror of one who is lost and
has been for sometime. Rose felt positively responsible for him, and somehow she
could feel herself growing older, even as her new companion’s age diminished.

“So what’s it like, if you’ve been there?” Rose asked.

“I can’t quite remember.” J replied.

“And how far is it away?”

“I can’t remember that either.”

“Then how will you know we’re in Lonersville when we get there? I’ve been
getting the impression that this is not a place that’s likely to have signs.”

J’s face, which had been growing with the terror of Rose doubting him,
suddenly grew calm and said confidently, “Oh, we’ll know.”

And so the two set off, glad of each other’s company, for there was
something very disquieting in the air.

They camped that night without taking the time to build a fire; they were so
exhausted. J pulled out a blanket from his tattered backpack, which Rose, upon
seeing its filthy condition, refused. The night got so cold, though, that Rose found
herself underneath it anyway. J slept only for the first couple hours, and then Rose
could see him sitting off on a small ridge staring off into the darkness like a sentry.
He was in the same position when Rose awoke in the morning. They ate a breakfast
mainly of leftover bread from the day before, though Rose produced two apples, and J dragged out the crushed remains of a box of chocolate chip cookies. They traveled all the next day, Rose at times concerned that they might be going the wrong way, especially when J told one of his stories which were highly entertaining but demanded all of his attention as he sought to act out many scenes. Rose talked very little. She was feeling a bit tired, and it suddenly seemed like she had been traveling for quite sometime, though she had boarded the Northbound Bus less than a week ago. Finally, with an ominous feeling, Rose asked J a question that had been troubling her.

“Why is it, J, that you have been to Lonersville but can’t remember it? And I can clearly see that you have some impression of the place, even if you don’t remember it.”

“I don’t know why I don’t remember. I think that’s the thing about Lonersville—it makes you forget…it makes you forget everything!” J shivered as he replied.

“Hmm. That doesn’t seem possible because I’ve heard of the place from a friend, and he, like you, remembers that he’s been there. So why is it that you’re forgetting all the details?” Rose said this last line to herself, for she frequently questioned what she did not understand out loud. J, however, was unused to someone asking a question and then trying to figure out the answer themselves, so he tried to answer as best he could,
“I think the closer we get to Lonersville, the less the details will matter, the colors will drain away, and all will begin smear together in a gloomy grey.”

“See J! You do remember!” Rose cried joyfully, but J’s look only grew more serious.

“Yes, I am beginning to remember, but I don’t think that’s a good thing. As I remember more of Lonersville, I’m forgetting things on the outside. Last night, I couldn’t remember my last name, and today I’ve forgotten my hometown. We’ll be there soon, but I don’t think I’ll be able to remember the way back. Are you sure you want to keep going—I have the feeling that this will be a complete failure.”

“Someone once told me that success is going from failure to failure with undiminished enthusiasm,” Rose said brightly.

“Well, that’s very profound, and it puts me at ease because I’ve just forgotten my name. I only remember that you are Rose.”

“And you are J!” Rose replied, but added after a few more steps, “I think.”

It was dark, damp, depressed, and stressed the urgency, which Rose triumphantly became ecstatic, when they found Lonersville. The air was chill, and it seemed to spill out of her grille like oil. The fog frosted trees in toil, dripping on the hermit’s head. Rose raised a hermit’s head and let it fall like he was dead. Everyone living apart, isolated from the start of days so dreary and nights so weary, alone, alone, echoing in the dark, “Get up!” Rose commanded, “Go to the park! You cannot live like this in lands so stark!” It was sad to see, sad to cry, sad to tell that time
went by in Lonersville, J did stay, and Rose tried and tried to take him away. It
didn’t work, he would not go, he went berserk and made a show. Then J crawled
and slithered into a Redwood cave, while Rose drawled and dithered to make him
brave.

Rose fled, the Shadow followed, he wanted to surprise her at the hollow,
where the creek and the crick come clamoring down, and you wish with your
willows they don’t find you in town. Through the woods in the dark of night, neither
Rose nor the Shadow remained in sight. If she would just slow down, if she would
just doubt, if she would become confused or collided or decided that she was
doomed, then the shadow would prey and stay, and Rose would never see another
day. But Rose rose from the ground, she could not be stopped or slowed down. In
the forest, she found the Vial of Hope and clutched it to herself, but then
remembered—it was for someone else. Someone she needed to save, someone she
told to be brave—it was for J, J she remembered had helped her on this horrible trip,
and now she would help him and get a grip on life again. And so it began. The
Shadow sensed his race was run, and in despair he found a gun, but a bear arrived on
the scene, his claws were sharp, his teeth were mean. The Shadow shot after
pointing the gun. The bear charged and was but stunned, driving down the Shadow
until he had won. Rose called out her prayers and blessings to help the bear who was
helping the girl who was trying and trying to help the world.

She ran back to Lonersville, back to J, he remembered her and did not want
to stay, in Lonersville, where all is still. “I am not ill, you cured me without a pill.”
J spoke, as one who awoke. “But the vial?!” Rose said. “No not the vial but in your head, you had hope for me and not just me, as we can see.” The hermits came out of their stumps to talk to one another and scratch their rumps. Rose giggled for it was great to see, people finally sharing their humanity. It was the beginning, not the end, and Rose and J wished they had more time to spend, with the hermits-no-longer and with each other, for he loved her like a sister and she him like a brother.

Rose and J parted when they reached the outskirts of town. It was very sad for them both. Rose had accomplished her original mission but felt very unsatisfied and had not found a place for her to live. J had not been on much of a mission to begin with, but for a while he felt he had a purpose as Rose’s guide. Now, that purpose would seemingly be gone.

“Here,” J said, taking a chain off his neck, which had a dog whistle at the end of it. “If you ever need help again, blow into this.”

“You’re so funny, J, how will you hear it?”

“I have canine ears.”

“But what if I am far away?”

“I’ll just get there as soon as I can.”

Then Rose had an idea. She took out her instant camera and used it for the first time. She took three pictures of herself and J together, the first she gave to J, the second she took, and the third she tore in half, keeping J’s picture for herself and giving her picture to J.

“We’ll put these together again someday soon.”
They hugged and parted with tears in their eyes, which they tried unsuccessfully to hide from one another. Rose suddenly realized as she was walking away that J had remained looking very young upon reaching the town, like a man given a second chance at life, while she felt much older. Indeed, although the journey should have only taken three and a half days, three years had gone by, Rose had grown three inches, gained thirty pounds, and looked like a young lady about to hit her sixteenth birthday. All this she could see in her mirror which she was using to watch J leave.

As she walked into town, Rose noticed a terrible smell coming from the direction of the ocean. She got to the plaza, where they had once had the farmer’s market, and Rose saw where they had set up a small soup kitchen on the corner, advertising free meals at lunch and dinner. It was named, Rose’s Café, but it was now abandoned, as indeed most of the town seemed to be. Rose saw in the Café’s window people hurrying across the square, and she turned to call to them.

“Stop, please.” But the people did not stop. “Please, what happened here? Where is everyone? What’s that horrible smell?”

A woman who was almost running now, slowed for a moment and said, “There’s been a red tide in the ocean. The second this month, and everything, everything is dead. All along the beach—birds, seals, whales—all gone. It’s horrible!”

“How did it happen?” Rose called, hoping the woman would not bolt before telling her.
“The sewers flooded, and the main artery that ran to the treatment plant backed up and burst, spilled into the ocean. It caused the red tides, the algae blooms, it killed everything.”

“Has someone fixed the sewers?”

The woman shrugged her shoulders and Rose shook her head. “Then why don’t we fix them?” Rose asked.

“Who? You and I?” The woman said laughing.

“It’s a start,” Rose said.

“I don’t think just you and I could do it, sweetie. There are some things that are just too big for us. I’ve got to go now, and you should probably go too. There’s no telling what plagues and diseases are going to follow that deadly tide.”

The woman turned to run away, having been long since abandoned by her companions, but Rose called out one last time, “I can find more help!”

The woman sighed and stood loudly chewing gum, popping it so loudly that Rose jumped, but she turned to Rose nevertheless and said, “Ok, sweetie, what’s your plan?”

Rose, of course, did not have a plan—at first. She had just heard about the problem, not two minutes ago. She needed time to think, but she did not want to lose the woman’s help.

“Is there no one left in this town?” Rose asked.

“Sure there are, many people are too poor to leave or have things that are keeping them from going. I was staying around because I had a monkey and a dog,
but they both bolted yesterday. Could they not take it anymore?’ The woman almost began crying, but instead focused her emotional energy on her gum. Rose had never seen anyone chew gum so intensely. At last, the woman spoke again. “People just stay inside all day, hoping to hide from the smell. Some people have not come out since the first tide, they had been hoarding food, you know.”

“You seem to know a lot about this community.”

“It’s my job to know, I’m a hair dresser, after all.”

“Then you might know how to get these people together.”

“We could wait until their food runs out,” the woman suggested.

“No, too slow, besides, I saw a Costco when I was first coming into this town. We need to bring everyone together at once.”

“Well, there’s the old fire bell. It hasn’t been rung in years. If you notice, most of the houses around here are made of plastic.”

“Plastic?”

“Well, synthetics.”

“Ok, then. Can you get the bell ready to ring? I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

“Sure honey, I can do that…By the way, what does a bell need before it’s ready to be rung?”

“Oh, I don’t know…I mean, of course, it must be cleaned, so that it will ring brightly, and the area around it must be free so that it can swing freely.”

“Oh, yeah, of course, I can do that,” the woman said but did not move.
“Right. Well, I can see, I’m going to have to be quick on this one. I’ll be back soon.”

The woman, Delilia, as Rose later found out, watched Rose leave and chewed her gum with the intensity of a thousand water buffalo crossing a crocodile infested river.

When Rose returned, she had with her J and at least a dozen people. Most of these people had no homes, otherwise they would be hiding in them. A few people had braved the stink and came out of their houses to join the odd parade that was beginning. Rose stood in the front and called Delilia over to her who by then had cleaned the bell well and was chewing with anticipation.

“No, you get in front of me,” Rose said, and Delilia did so. Rose put her hand on Delilia’s shoulder and whispered into her ear. “Call everyone to attention with the loudest snap of your gum that you’ve ever done.”

“Sweetie, you don’t want that, this one goes to eleven,” Delilia said, pointing to her mouth.

Rose cracked up. “Come on, let us feel the noise.”

So Delilia did, and it sounded like Paul Bunyan had just rat-tailed Babe with a towel for putting a hoof in his cabbage soup. Everyone straightened into a line, and Rose began marching in place, so that her knees gently, meticulously, and most annoyingly hitting Delilia’s buttocks. Soon the whole troop was marching in place. “Forward!” Rose commanded.
“It’s the longest parade in the world…” Rose began singing, her knees kneeing with extra glee.

“Is this really the longest parade in the world?” Delilia asked.

“Only for the person in front. Now if you please…” And so Rose began:

It’s the longest parade in the world
And you’re thinking that it’s got to stop
Or you are going to blow your top
But then she kicks up another verse
And this one not been rehearsed
Oh what are we to do, if we step in the poo
It can’t stop the longest parade in the world

The parade was gathering steam, drawing out the last remnants of the town—elderly people, lifers, poor people, all that could not or would not leave, but would now help make things right again. Rose sent off J with a man who was dressed in a monk’s cassock or woolen bathrobe (she could not be sure), to ring the bell so that those on the outskirts of town might come out too.

It’s the longest parade in the world
Now we’ve walked seven long blocks
Past a moustached man who sells clocks
Then we climb up the hill
To find the world is standing still
Oh how long can she go on, singing that silly song
Wait till the end of the longest parade in the world.

The parade was swelling rapidly and many people began to add in their own music—people slapped their knees, hooted like train whistles, belched in rhythm, one man played a harmonica and one woman played a duck, gently squeezing her pet bagpipe-like to get nice rich quack.

It’s the longest parade in the world
And we’re gonna out march the stink
Pull the plug to drain the sink
Hope the hopper will flush not overflow
Watering a garden where the plunger tree will grow
Fifty years of Trash, Gone in a Flash
Thanks to the Longest Parade in the World!

Rose was really starting to get into the groove of the song and was almost disappointed now that they were nearing the pipes that entered into the bay. She wanted to keep marching and singing, but she knew there was work to do. An engineer and some professors, who had been trying without aid or funding, to find a solution to the problem saw Rose’s parade go by their meeting room. The engineer ran out of the house.

“Are you going to clear those pipes?” He asked.

“Yes. I think that’s a good place to start,” Rose replied.

“Well, with all that backed up sewage being released into the bay and then into the ocean there’s going to be another red tide.”
“Then what are we to do? The next time it rains the storm drains will overflow, people’s pipes are going to burst.”

“We’re going to create a marsh that will filter all of that sewage before it gets released into bay. I’ve drawn up the plan, there’s going to be a series of ponds that…”

And so they all went to work, under the direction of the engineer and the professors. They formed different committees. J was kind and brave enough to gather a group that cleaned up the carcasses and composted them. Others dug canals to moist depressions that had formerly been ponds before the creeks had been diverted for irrigation. Another group set to work gathering boats and dredging the bay, which had slowly filled with silt massively increased by the clear cutting practices of recent years. Since everything had been abandoned with such haste, there was quite a bit available which wouldn’t have been or would have been at cost, but now was borrowed to stave off the disaster. J found a dump truck and hooked it up with a bumpin’ PA system and a huge trailer holding goats and pigs feeding on organic waste and producing manure at a prodigious rate. It smelled so badly, and J was out of his mind cackling with the stink, though still very competent to drive as the rolling behemoth could only do five miles an hour maximum. An old man in a golf cart drove by J throwing rotting eggs and turnips, taunting and laughing like a mad man. That started it, but it was the catapult of flaming marshmallow that made everything stick. Soon people were throwing all of the garbage on the streets and in the alleys on it: flyers, wrappers, cigarette butts, several dollars pennies, parking
tickets, a tire, a slip and slide, thirteen Ken dolls with their legs snapped back in a freaky manner, several fake moustaches, an entire Civil War action set meticulously stripped of their uniforms and thus confused about whom they should fight, a twenty-eight piece spandex collage that no one would admit to but that many secretly admired. So it was, this beast of human refuse, a product of man’s love for excess and cute packaging, the more that stuck to it, the slower it went and the louder J cackled. Suddenly, there was a great shaking. Rose, who happened to be near by, yelled out, “J, get out of there.” And while he did, the animals were freed from their trailer. No sooner had they all gotten to safety then a giant sinkhole opened up and swallowed the whole thing. The hole was actually a deep bunker, built by the government with the idea of storing cashews and other nuts during wartime crisis, when our nut supply might be endangered. Thus, the streets were quite a bit cleaner; the site was covered and mulched and years later a tree grew bearing fruit which looked and smelled much like a fully loaded nappy, but the people loved and revered the tree for it reminded them of when they pushed the environment to the brink, and it was told that the pulp of said fruit was an excellent cure for hemorrhoids.

At last the marsh was finished, the ocean and the redirected streams met once again, and the ecosystem worked to filter and treat the sewage. Only organic farming was allowed along the coast or any place trading with the town. Since the national government had issued a warning to abandon the town rather than save it, the townspeople took it upon themselves to appoint a leader and chose Rose as their queen. Rose politely abdicated her position and powers to an interim government
made of two couples, three women and a man, who had stayed with their families because they too believed in the town and could not leave. Both couples had been through tough times, but they loved each other deeply, stuck by one another through thick and thin, and had raised amazing children whom they loved deeply. This, by Rose’s standard, made them wise as well reliable and so they could be counted on to make wise decisions. She appointed the engineer and the four professors to be judges, and she set elections in a year’s time. The town grew and thrived, but Rose, once she had saved it, had to ramble on.
Chapter Four

“Ben Zoma said: Who is wise? He who learns from every man…. Who is mighty? He that subdues his (evil) inclination…. Who is rich? He that rejoices in his lot…. Who is honored? He that honors his fellow men….‖ The Talmud

On the eve before Daniel’s arrival in town, Luke sat in a very tiny office, stacked with books and papers, gadgets and inspirational posters, all in disarray. It was almost too stereotypically the office of a young college professor and noted activist. Luke did not mind; he paid, even to a fault, little attention to such details. Besides, he was writing now, as he almost always was in the office, and he felt he needed a good deal of clutter to help his thinking. Now, however, he was noticeably fidgety in his seat, he kept looking around, and there was not a thing on his computer. Then, with a look of inspiration, he began to compose:

“I was asked by the publishers of this magazine to provide, for the metaphorical New Year’s of 2020, a retrospective summary of the most important events, movements, or changes in the past decade. Given such an immense topic, I admit I have sorely missed my deadline having found it difficult not to write philosophy when I should be writing history. From a historical perspective, I must, unfortunately, begin with something that has not changed in the slightest nor will any time soon in the foreseeable future—war. We are again involved in hostilities, the current government’s nickname for what is but a stone’s throw away from total war, in both the Middle East and Southeast Asia. We are involved in four Middle Eastern
countries and three Southeast Asian countries; in terms of total troop deployment, we are at the highest level at anytime since WWII. We call this a continuation of the war on terror, and since our enemies do indeed use terror tactics, and since we have the support of the governments in whose countries we fight, it indeed appears to be a war on terror. Let me ask this question: Has the amount of terror in the world increased or fallen due to our actions?

Now I agree that we can not sit idly by while the perpetrators of mass murder and other despicable acts go free, yet it appears that we have not one, but two possible courses of action to meet this threat: victory by coercion (as has almost always been done) or victory by commission. If our ultimate objective is to create a world in which countries and peoples work together harmoniously, where the rule of enlightened law is not the brandishing of a stick, but a universal ethic, and where the freedoms that Americans profess to enjoy are spread like a salve soothing the areas torn by conflict and oppression, this can never be done through coercion. But it is my thesis that it can be done slowly over time by commission.

Coercion will not work for several reasons. Every new war or conflict, no matter what the stated objective is, remains a war of competing groups to monopolize or control over the earth’s resources on various scales. These competing groups come in four basic structures. They are: conflicts of nation states, ideology, class, and ethnicity. The advocates of coercion rely either on the fear that slow solutions, such as aid, education, or other attempts at building parity, will not be effective or will come too late, or, in a similar argument, that it is the nature of
humans to forever strive for disparity and power, and thus true equanimity is neither a possibility nor a desired state. They say these groups have always existed and thus should always exist - a naturalistic fallacy. In the end, both of these arguments are exceptionally pessimistic, and it is the actions guided by such thinking that continually perpetuate all of the distinctions that make one man take another’s life. I am not a utopian; it will take time to bleed the wells of hate dry, it will take suffering and indignations, but if we attack the causes of the terrorist and militarist attitude, we stand a chance to reach some higher means of conflict resolution.

For what has actually happened over the last decade, I cannot paint a rosy picture. The increased privatization of the military has only strengthened the perception and many times the reality that our exploits are about resources. The near total privatization of our prison system has brought increased prisoner abuse and anesthetized public attention more than any time since Attica. More fundamentally, we seem to have resolved the question of whether individuals should financially benefit from war and punishment with a resounding yes. I can only hope this debate opens once again.

Abortion was illegalized in 2019. I will not enter here into the moral debate because, it may come as a surprise, I am personally against abortion, but I am pro-choice. I have not yet resolved these obvious contradictions. However, one thing of note is that roughly twenty years after Row V. Wade, America saw a large drop in crime at a time when everyone was predicting things to get worse. The recent spike
in crime does not correlate to the illegalization of abortion, unless there has been a sudden spike in the crimes committed in our elementary schools.

Several new drugs have hit the streets with as much force as the crack-boom on the 1980s. These are all probable reasons for the rising level of crime. But if the legalization of abortion made the crime rate drop during the 1990s, what will happen twenty years after the illegalization of abortion?

The other event that has far more reaching consequences than, I can only hope, was thought of at the time was the passage of the Marriage Amendment in 2013. This, when it was first introduced, was not taken seriously as a potentiality, but as an election gimmick. Perhaps this is how it managed to sneak into our constitution because it was, in my point of view, a clear violation of the document we had. It rode in on the coattails of two domestic murder cases in which two gay men killed their partners and through media portrayal, came to represent all gay men and women wishing to live together in loving union in a negative light. There are plenty of straight couples who do terrible things to one another, but stopping domestic abuse rather than abolishing marriage should be the focus. It was bolstered by the opinion that if society could not govern the moral nature of the country, it cannot legally distinguish between pedophilia, bestiality, and gay marriage. Should I repeat that argument—we cannot distinguish between an adult having sex with a child, an animal, and another consensual adult. Well, there is such a way to do this, but it involves principles that can be argued out, rather than blanketed in mysticism. We can say that adults are due certain rights and responsibilities and that one of
those rights is to govern their own sex life as long as it does affect any being who is incapable of making a similar adult decision. What does the alternative argument look like?

Now we all know that Jesus never made a homophobic comment; unsurprising, given the compassion that he seemed to have for all. So to oppose gay marriage the religious right must either rely on tradition (absurdly, as slavery was once a tradition), or they must go to the Old Testament, and here they pick and choose, as best suits their fancy, what is trivial and what is imperative. For instance, they may ignore the entirety of the dietary laws of Leviticus, the contradictions between the old wrathful, jealous God and new forgiving one, or the fact that David, under God’s command, could lay the entirety of a conquered city along three lines and arbitrarily put to death, with saws and axes, two of the lines, but if this book says something about homosexuality, then we had better take notice and write it into our Constitution. Thereby, we effectively substitute one document for another, as long as a majority vote can push it down the throats of the rest of the country. Of course, in a similar way, if the numbers supported it, we might use the Koran or the Talmud as our new legal guide, but I would personally prefer the Tao Te Ching.”

Luke sat back from the computer suddenly with a frustrated look. He read over what he had just written and then, shaking his head and muttering, “That will never get published,” deleted the file. It was too informal and emotional, even for the magazine for which he was writing. Worse, it seemed like he was attacking all religion rather than just religious interpretation. He wanted to write something more
subtle and yet powerful—an essay on whether there was a universal ethic that could be deduced through reasoning with faith, not faith without reason.

Luke looked at his the clock on the wall behind him.

“Ah, shit,” he said, jumping up. “Why don’t I put that thing in front of me?”

But he left it just where it was and hurried out the door with his coat and bag.
Daniel’s father Isaiah was waiting outside a black car when Daniel was finally released. His father was tall, with a powerful figure, but his hair was grey, his face was wrinkled, and he seemed aged beyond his years. He was like a redwood tree, a Semperviron, with roots that made him immoveable from the ground, but he could be flexible like a tree in the wind. He wore a compassionate, joyful, but ironic grin which puzzled Daniel. Daniel also felt a bit peculiar, his illness had passed, but his detention left a bad feeling. He wasn’t quite sure if he was being discharged from the hospital or released from jail, but either way he had that feeling that what he had gone through sucked but what he was about to go through wasn’t going to be a whole lot better. It was a grim realization that conflicted with his feelings of seeing his father, and when he gave his father a hug, the bitterness left his mouth and a warm feeling comforted him, despite the fact that his dad squeezed a particularly sore rib. When they were driving away Daniel was quiet for a few minutes, so Daniel’s father asked him a question.

“So, what was he like, the man, who killed himself in Chicago?”

“You know about that?” Daniel asked.

“Of course, I do. The company’s computers are linked into every airport camera, train station, subway stop, thousands of intersections, office buildings—only Britain is a more recorded country.”
“Then you know that they’re reporting it all wrong. Shouldn’t we expose that?”

“And who would be the bad guys we would be bringing down?”

“I don’t know the media or the company or whoever is screwing it up.”

“Well, now you’ve hit the nail on the head—the media, the company—they’re quite the same by now. But I have nothing to do with that now,” Isaiah said with a heavy note in his voice.

“It’s a monster you’ve created, Father,” Daniel said, but sadly, without personal judgment.

“It was a simple monster many years ago, now it’s a hydra and can afford to chop off one of its heads. I was let go by the company—that’s where I was in fact when I should have been picking you up. It seems that this whole thing is my fault in some way or other, and I’m terribly sorry. The cameras caught you picking up Dr. Keene’s note, but they didn’t know what it said, and they’ve been running themselves ragged trying to figure out how you fit into all this.”

“All of what? I don’t know what’s going on, and I don’t fit into this.”

“Oh you do, Dr. Keene worked for our company—an analyst of people’s facial expressions, body language, patterns of behavior. But what he has to do with you is as much of a mystery as why I was let go from the company that I had grown from day one. And Daniel, understand me now, the man you left would have been outraged at his treatment and considered the detention of his son as unacceptable. But I have long since weaned myself of the opinion that my money, my military
connections, etc. meant something. They are but a mirage of the spirit of the times, and though there are men who do truly wield power—they are the ones who had taken over my company years ago, when my eyes were focused on your mother’s. These people are the same that fired me, detained you, and fixed the media, and I want to know why as much as you. Something happened, Daniel, something while you were growing up, a loosening of the laws of this country, the rewriting of *habeas corpus*, the acceptability of torture, of kidnapping, of the bending and twisting of everything that separated US from them. But then, I’ve always been a history buff, as you know, and I don’t think that in action, there has ever been much that separated us from them.”

“Dad, how unpatriotic of you,” Daniel said.

“I’ve spent my life defending this country, or at least I once thought, so I should at least be able to criticize it. You know I’ve been thinking what is a country? It’s either some basic commonly held beliefs as to what justice is and how it is to be preserved and extended to all its inhabitants, or it’s an economic machine bending and fighting the world to get a larger share of the resources. We need cooperation, not war, we need dialogue, not name calling. I’m ashamed that it has taken me so long to understand this. It’s funny, the first war I was in, well I guess the only war I’ve been in, I believed in what we were doing, but in the end I think you come to see war as a colossal failure no matter who wins. Personally, and I know I’ve never really talked about it, but that war nearly destroyed me. So then I thought that through better information systems, smarter weapons, you could take
much of the suffering out of war. But you can’t because it’s human nature to resist coercion—the very act of forcing a style of governance, economics, even social mannerisms, is bound to cause a reaction, and the more violence you use in coercing, the more violence you will meet in return. You know….”

He was about to go on, wishing very much that his speech would show his son the radical shift in his beliefs, the cause of so many arguments in the past, but he could see that Daniel was preoccupied with his own problems, and anyway, it seemed that his son had long since forgiven any bad feelings between the two. This was both gladdening and disappointing at the same time, and Isaiah could not help but notice the irony.

“So what was in the note? Did you tell them? That is what they wanted to know.”

“They never asked. Although they made so jokes about my ‘busy’ day, so they knew everything that happened in Chicago. But then if they did know everything, why didn’t they mention the one piece of information they were looking for? This whole thing makes no sense!” Daniel said, at last revealing the frustration that had been eating him up for days now.

He wanted none of this—no Dr. Keene, no Boethius, no mysterious company that had more to do with his father than himself. It was as if he forgot that his purpose in traveling was to see his brother, and now instead of a nice vacation visiting his father and friends, he wanted to be on his way to the Philippines.

“Dad, can we go to the library? I need to look some things up.”
His father was surprised but agreed, and the two discussed what they knew of the matter as they drove to a big library in the outer Mission.

Daniel’s father was named Isaiah, and he came from the Pennsylvanian Appalachia, raised by a family of poor, strict Baptists and living beside a community of mostly Mennonites with whom they were very friendly but unfortunately learned little of their ways. Isaiah was an exceptionally bright lad, very warm hearted with almost a glow about him. His childhood was rather hard though, both of his parents in and out of work, and he too joined this parade at a very young age with quite a bit more success for he was willing to work for desperately meager wages, and he was, in fact, much smarter than those who employed him, so that he was indispensable at solving their problems. He had to drop out of school because of work, but he studied relentlessly on his own and received a high school degree through a special night course; this was at the age of 16. Thus, he entered college, studying engineering, computers and information systems, and was mid-way through with his sophomore year when the rumblings of war began and he, having just turned 18, was caught in the wave of national spirit that accompanied the First Gulf War, decided to enlist, and made it through boot camp in time to be on the first line that rolled through the Iraqi desert. Isaiah was not always a Fortunate Son, however.

He was assigned to an armored division made mostly of improvised caterpillars that had been made into tanks. On one of these he rode and lost whatever innocence remained of a boy who had already grown up too quickly. He was seated
behind a machine gun while the tank rode at thirty miles an hour, blaring warnings
too late to be heard, parallel to the Iraqi trenches and burying them with mountains
of sand and rock. He saw the faces of those he buried, each and every one, as they
desperately tried to jump out and surrender or stood silently and prayed. He could
reason that they were the enemy, the aggressor, brutal in their takeover of Kuwait,
resilient in their defiance of both the U.S. and the U.N., but he could never quite
forgive himself for what he had done, the lives he had destroyed, the men he had
buried. He spent the rest of the war like a zombie, an automaton, the ideal soldier
really, from certain points of view, for he submitted completely to his commanders
and was promoted for his obedience and his obvious intelligence which could not
help but show itself. He served for a little over two years, completing his contract
but not the mission, and he then traveled to the Philippines to spend some of his
savings and recover.

This is not what he did in the Philippines. Instead, he gave himself to his
nightmares, lost the remainder of a faith that had been rammed down his throat as a
child, began drinking heavily, smoking cheap Filipino amphetamines and, after a
month or so of wasting away, began sleeping with prostitutes. It was sheer
perversity that such a handsome, intelligent young man, all of 20, should need to
result such means, and indeed there was no need as he was well liked and actively
sought by the female travelers who frequented the beaches and bars that he did. He
did such things to harm himself, for even though he had lost his faith, he was quite
aware that he had a soul. His one saving grace was that he never looked down in the
slightest upon these women, feeling himself to be much lower than they, and he had
developed a natural affection for these women, which most men committing such
acts do their best to avoid. During the fourth month of his stay, his parents were
taken from him in a car accident; he left two of his lovers a good deal of money to
start their own businesses and then went home to take care of his parents’ funeral.
But he and things could go lower still.

He moved back home for a short while, taking care of the arrangements for
his parents’ funeral, but otherwise avoiding walking the streets he played on as a
child. Even his home was a place of sorrow rather than comfort. It was quite
obvious he had not enjoyed his life in this house, nor had he particularly despised it,
his home was a place of sorrow rather than comfort. It was quite
obvious he had not enjoyed his life in this house, nor had he particularly despised it,
he simply felt detached, as if he refused to allow himself to remember it at all. It
occurred to him that he had spent most of his life escaping an unsatisfying past and
chasing a dream that did not really exist—at least not for him. He was not made to
be a soldier, he was far too sensitive for what war required, yet after his experiences
in Iraq and the carnage that he saw, one fact had been driven into his mind and
remained bouncing around in there in a confused state—there were evil and evil
men, and he should set his talents to stopping those evil men. When he thought of
ever, for a second thought of the Iraqis whom he had buried, but rather the
people who had placed those Iraqis in those trenches, the commanders who ordered
summary executions and rapes of Kuwaitis, and then set hundreds of wells on fire,
creating a hell on Earth. The problem was that you could not be sure if the evil came
from one dictator or a group of malicious supporters or the individual soldiers
themselves. One needed information, good reliable information in order to find such things out. But while Isaiah reasoned this far, his mind was too trodden with depression and sodden with alcohol to do much about it. These grandiose ideas of being at the forefront in the battle between good and evil became more and more a frustrated fantasy fuelled by a life of dissipation and copious amounts of vodka. Things got worse and worse until one day, in a moment of clarity, as they say, it became evident to Isaiah that he was either losing his mind or working on doing so to the best of his ability. The next week he sold his childhood home, gathered what money he could, and, like so many others, headed to California to make a new start.

In California, he started a small company that was used to track anything bought or sold by the U.S. Military, or rather by any member of the military, not the organization itself, as he had no official orders; it was the heyday of both the Internet and military privatization. Orders poured in from Amazon at nearly the same rate as pre-packaged meals for the troops provided by Haliburton or one or its subsidiaries. Isaiah had the fortune to travel to many of the places he supplied services to, and he conscientiously made this part of his job, so that he would learn something and have a purpose. Inside, he remained the same as before, relying upon himself as his only true friend, and those around him felt the distance. The company began to change, however, after he had established contacts higher up in the Defense Department and the Pentagon. Recognizing his talents for informational systems, what many in intelligence agencies wanted to know was whether there was any special pattern of purchases being made by soldiers and more specifically, were there any specific
communications—emails, blogs, cell phone records, (things that became more popular around the turn of the Millennium), meetings between likeminded people that seemed suspicious beyond a compatible fondness for beer and pool. It occurred to Isaiah that what he was being asked to do was create algorithms that would essentially data-mine communications and behaviors of our own troops, to spy on our own troops, who publicly would be praised as heroes defending our country and privately suspected. There was a turning in his stomach upon this realization, but he let it go, and that is how things like this begin—small steps at a time. The automaton feeling he experienced at the end of the first Gulf War took over because he was rewarded for being so crass and jaded, rewarded for ignoring his conscience, and using his mind to create information systems which he knew in the back of his head had dangerous potential. Meanwhile, in his personal life, things began once again to take a downward movement to loss of control, towards isolation, and that is how these movements begin—small steps at a time.

It was his birthday, though he had somehow contrived to forget it, but only in part. He planned after work on drinking heavily and withstanding the crushing hangover that would follow the next day. He had few friends, and none had remembered his birthday. It was a day of such intense loneliness that other more dangerous thoughts began to leak into his head. On his way home, he drove along listlessly, stopping to get a bottle of gin and then having a sudden revulsion when he thought of consuming it. He instead headed south on the 101 towards Pacifica, along
the curves of Devil’s Slide, and tears began to flow from his eyes as he thought how easy it would be to just drive straight for a moment, to plunge off the side and so to end the crushing loneliness. His whole life seemed like it had been nothing but pain, when it had at one time shown so much promise, and the choices that had brought him to this moment were his own, made on bad information, on false dreams, on ideals that no longer existed for him, and yet at the same time he was becoming a self-proclaimed king of information—the hollow type of information that can be analyzed by taking words and actions out of contexts and reassembling them, as though creating a whole new person, a whole new personality. And he wondered, if the same techniques were applied to himself, as he was sure they had been, what type of profile, what new person he was as a set of collected data points, and if this digital self looked or felt any better than the real one.

He did not go off the turns before Pacifica, but instead continued down to Pescadero, where once he remembered a gas station that served the best Mexican food he had ever eaten. There he met Maria. She was about younger than he, and she had come to the U.S. after being sponsored by a flower farm that had gone out of business a year earlier. Instead of being deported, Maria sank into the underground of a community that looked after one another. She found work at the gas station that was owned by an in-law and did almost all of the cooking herself. She was beautiful, but looked older than her years. The sun, under which she had worked most her life, had bronzed and slightly leathered her skin. Her body was short and muscular, voluptuous, but more designed for construction work than parading on a
runway. Her eyes, however, were soft and compassionate. Maria was intensely sensitive towards others’ sufferings, perhaps because much suffering had surrounded her in her early life. Isaiah met her eyes for a brief moment, and all that he had been thinking, the contemplations of that day, his desperation were suddenly understood by another human being.

Their courtship was short and odd in that both felt that they had been sent to the other. Maria was like an angel to Isaiah, she restored him to health and then began working on his soul. They were married in less than a year, and Isaiah began to face some of the demons of his past. It had been ten years since he had been in the Philippines, but it had plagued him that he may have impregnated one of the many women he had been with. The whole period, in his memory, was a haze punctuated with visions of women’s faces that he should have cared about, but didn’t. So, shortly after their marriage, Isaiah and Maria, flew to the Philippines in 2002 to adopt Daniel, who was three at the time. The orphanage, which was constantly overpopulated and undersupplied, did not disclose that Daniel did in fact have a brother. Why did they not try to keep the brothers together? Alas, it was not that the people working at the orphanage didn’t care, but they simply looked at each child as a burden and getting rid of one burden was good enough—they didn’t want to push their luck. Ironically, Isaiah and Maria would gladly have taken both, if they had been asked. So it was that Daniel went to the U.S., and his brother remained in the Philippines.
Daniel and his father got to the library, where they spent a great deal of time going through newspapers looking for articles that should have been printed but were not—the kind that Daniel, Gavin, and Luke had discussed at the bar. They spoke in hushed tones, not only because it was a library, but also because Daniel got a creepy feeling that someone was trying to listen in. Sure enough, when Daniel mentioned the name Boethius, a man stood up from the computer that was nearly opposite from them.

The man’s face seemed familiar, but Daniel could not tell why. When he spoke, he said only, “I know Boethius, if you want information on him, call me.” And with that he flipped them a card. It read Calvin Johnson, with a phone number scrawled at the bottom.

Daniel and his father left the library, glad of each other’s company, for they loved one another, and they could feel the rumblings of a storm brewing.
Chapter Six

Calvin Johnson was a household name to much of television-watching America in the year 2020. He had started as a video critic or broadcasting philosopher, as he liked to call it, on those television shows where lesser celebrities are asked to comment on greater celebrities and how they fit into certain categories such as The Twenty Hottest Moments in Rock or Hollywood’s Top Ten Most Shocking Sex Changes. These shows had become immensely popular in the last two decades and covered, if you can believe it, even more trivial categories and rankings, but the one person who seemed to be on nearly every show was Calvin Johnson. He was a handsome man in his early thirties, with a friendly face and a look of perpetual youth. He started most of his commentaries with a little laugh or a “well, let me tell ya…”, as though he was letting the viewer into a little known secret, and he would. He would give the most intelligent, most acute diagnosis that would cut right to the heart of what was being discussed and puncture the discussion with one intense eruption of thought. No one wanted to go before him in fear of being upstaged, and no one wanted to go after him because he seemed impossible to follow, so he was given his own show called “Aphorisms.” For roughly twenty-two minutes each night, he would fire off a succession of maxims, most no more than ten seconds, and keep America dumbfounded with his insight.

The only odd thing about Calvin Johnson was that nobody knew where he had come from or what he did before he became a social critic. While others of the lesser known celebrity type had their names accompanied by a label such as
Comedian or Television Writer, Calvin Johnson’s name stood by itself. No one could remember seeing him in a movie or in a band or seeing his name on a book, but it was assumed that he must have done something of importance or else he would have never made it onto TV. There were no probes into his background, he gave no personal interview, and the mystery began to add to the allure of the man who was now being called “the second coming of La Rochefoucauld” in some circles and “like a young Eddie Murphy” in others. But he had done something; he had written a series of graphic novels that were an underground phenomenon in their own right.

Only his editor knew, and the books were written under the name The Night Watchman. The Night Watchman was actually a character in the books, but he was always drawn as lurking in the shadows, barely perceptible to the reader. The drawings were dark and sometimes disturbing, but they were wonderfully imaginative and very well drawn. It was the storyline, however, that was the most interesting aspect of the book.

In each episode, the Watchman would come upon some crime. Sometimes it was a political scandal, sometimes a series of murders, and sometimes even something as despicable as a case of domestic violence. There is no worse crime than when a family member betrays another. The Watchman would follow some character or characters throughout their various crimes and misdeeds, and in the end would expose them in their villainy. He was, however, at first, a purely passive character, never actually stopping the crime from happening, and this created quite a stir because it just so happened that the crimes in several of the books corresponded
to actual crimes. Later though, he decided to take matters into his own hands. That is only good if the hands are strong and directed by a wise person. Calvin was incredibly smart, but he was not wise. The drawings were so life-like, and the details of the crime were so accurate, that it was wondered whether both the police and prosecutors throughout country were not regular readers. The crimes mostly occurred in California, particularly the Bay Area, but if the Watchman took a vacation, he was certain to find something juicy and controversial wherever he went. One book, for instance, had exposed a ring of human smuggling that went right up to the mayor of San Diego. This was applauded as heroic investigative journalism. But when another book exposed a serial killer, describing each murder in detail as being witnessed by the Watchman, it was questioned whether the author had simply invoked some creative license or had coldly watched the murders taking place and not acted. For this reason, the author’s identity was pursued by police officials and prosecutors, and there was a large court battle over trying to force the Watchman’s editor to reveal the author’s identity. While this was going on, an episode appeared, straight from a phantom press, that exposed the redistribution for sale of confiscated drugs by several Bay Area police stations. It was a political disaster for the police, and in this light, the attempt to reveal the author’s identity looked like a self-serving witch-hunt. Just the same, the moral and political questions involved with the graphic novels meant that they were too sensitive of an issue to be covered by the mainstream media. No one knew on which side of the controversy to come out because no one knew the true nature of the Watchman. The books attained a cult
status, youths generally believed that everything in the books were true, and these youths were so impressionable that they believed that the Watchman was definitely a source of good, but one that stood apart from the usual channels of power and authority. Just as Boethius, he began to manipulate the young and the vulnerable.

He had spent so long being a critic that he became consumed with judgment. The plank was firmly planted in his eye, he made no effort to remove it, and so his views of others became more and more warped, more and more judgmental. Also, by taking the law into his own hands, he never second guessed himself, never thought about another person's situation, and so, little by little, all the good intentions he may have started with began to erode. He was always, as he said to himself, "the man who had the right answer."

"I know what is best and I know how to help the world," he would say in his mind.

But then how could such a man help the world? How can a teacher or a student begin to learn, if they never concede that they don't know anything? This is what Socrates said, "I know only that I know nothing." Of course, Socrates had his own opinions. He presented them in The Republic on what he thought a model society should look like. His meaning was that you must first confess that you can never be 100% sure about anything and that your mind is open to the fact that you may be wrong. He kept the door open, whereas Calvin had long ago shut it completely. And this shutting of the door translated into action. He would often persecute the wrong person, making a quick, supercilious judgment. He often helped
send innocent people to prison, and if he found out that he had done so, his smugness and self-righteousness would not allow him to change his actions and right his wrongs. This increased as time went on. Whatever good he started with was lost, and soon he would make the most terrible mistake. One more thing about judgment: if there was ever to be any Judgment Day, as recorded in the Bible, particularly Revelations, on such a day all would be forgiven. If God is pure love and infinite compassion, how could he ever judge anyone and send them to a horrible place, as described as Hell? No one starts out evil in their lives. Something bad happens along the way to destroy their moral compass which tells right from wrong. It is these things that we must prevent, if we are to stop evil in this world.
Chapter Seven

A stranger entered in the back of a large, open room comprising the entirety of an apartment building’s basement and watched as an older looking man, weathered so as to obscure his real age and wearing a sort coarse monk’s cassock, held the attention of a small group, apparently in some sort of prayer or meditation. The room was so silent that the stranger’s entrance could not have gone unnoticed, but not a single person turned to look or otherwise break from their daydream. Soon, the old man looked up and squinted with big vacuous eyes, caught the stranger’s gaze, and then gave a barely perceptible nod of acknowledgement. His face was red and bloated, though not too badly, and he was of enormous stature and girth. Together with a large graying beard and a portly stature, he resembled a Santa Claus or a Greek philosopher. And it was philosophy that he spoke, but at once a listener could sense a passion and a rage that only faith could create. When he spoke, there was a palpable sense of rapture amongst his following, and one could tell at once that sense had left the building. The stranger smiled and listened to his sermon.

“Every organization that society has ever produced, every tradition it has held, every law it has spoken, has but one goal—to destroy the individual. Beware of any organization, even of this one, if it does not agree with your most natural instincts to be free, to stand out amongst the mob and proclaim: ‘I have a unique idea because I have a unique soul! You may follow me, but I will never follow you!’”

The very mechanisms of modern society that promised expression of the individual—Capitalism and Democracy—are the very things that tether man as he
has never been before. It has been proclaimed time and again that ‘there is no alternative.’ The masters of these systems say that this is the true nature of man—to compete. Well, maybe it is, but what they really mean is not to compete, but to dominate one another! I ask you though, what if an individual—acting as an individual, under his or her own will, no one else’s—what if this individual would choose not to dominate, but to sacrifice to dedicate themselves freely to the benefit of each other? Is this not the promised gift? But those who wish to hold their seats of power cannot have this and so must convince that war is inevitable—that crime can only be punished never prevented—that life means cutting the throats of your brother man in order to get a piece of that shrinking pie. So they bomb and lie and manipulate, they crush all of humanity into one voice, and it is the voice of the mob that they will cause to turn upon and devour one another. What remains is to be their feast.

But there is a voice that can’t be silenced if we wake the sleeping senses of our true selves that have been drugged, blunted, insulted, and injured by the violent and crass machines of society. We, who are gathered here today, are victims of this abuse and injustice! We have been held in bondage by a lifetime of lies, through false schooling, propaganda, and the relentless commercialization of the soul, so that we may make their products, fight their wars, pay their taxes, and then sacrifice ourselves to rich, powerful, self-proclaimed Masters. But I have no Master! …and soon you shall neither.
We are standing on the verge of a new epoch. The individual must now stand up and be counted, if the individual is ever to exist again. Our forefathers, such as Bakunin and Proudhon, thought that the matter of the individual was primarily economic and, indeed, the crushing of the soul is often to fuel the economic machine—you cannot have a society of freethinkers if you are to have workers who are willing to accept a criminally unequal share of the profits of their labor. It is, of course, true that today’s CEO works about five hundred times harder than the average factory worker…”

Here, there was a loud snicker from the man in the back of the room, and this time it did draw the attention of the gathering, as most members turned around and glowered with the most hateful stares.

“How could anyone interrupt this man of brilliance, of almost holy stature?” seemed to be in everyone’s mind.

But that may have been the root of the man’s snicker. Up until now, the entire monologue had an apocalyptic tone, dressed with vague inflammatory language, but suddenly the speaker changed course and tried logic rather than wrath. The speaker was clearly outraged at the interruption but composed himself immediately and began again in somewhat of a different tact, slowly, then gathering steam.

“But today, when most of this country’s populace have possessions and capabilities that would never be believed in previous times, does the individual fare any better? No, it is far worse. Think of one dream or ambition that is your own, I
mean, one thing that you want that is not really an imitation of what other people want or want for you. Most people cannot think of a single thing because, by the time they consider the question, their individuality has been lost. We always want ‘things,’ we are jealous of other people’s things and will break our backs or the back of others to get those things. But man does not live by bread alone! That is a line I stole from the enemy because they never used it. I say live by ideas! Live by experiencing every bit of beauty this world has to offer. But you cannot have it if you eat at their trough!”

This last sentence was especially loud and seemed directed at the man in the back. Some people started to worry that the speaker and the man in the back were having some sort of secret conversation, and they worried what this could mean.

“The way to begin is to purge your life. Start simple. Every article of clothing that carries an insignia or an advertisement or was bought with some sense of ‘fitting in’ or appealing to others, burn it. Do not watch TV or movies; read only, and then be careful. Listen only to what moves your soul; what doesn’t is worthless. End all memberships to any clubs, parties, or organizations. Soon, when you are stronger, you will find it naturally intolerable to work for anyone but yourself, then to stop paying taxes, if it can be avoided, and then to finally disappear from society’s sight altogether. Oh, but you will be so much greater, so much freer then.

These are significant steps, but they are not your main concern. Since we were born, the goal has been to make us believe that there is something outside of us that is truth, that is value. People claim that this objective value exists and that they
have the correct knowledge of what it is, but they are merely repeating what has been
told to them and what they believe because it most likely fulfills their predestined
desires. And how many times does this objective value cause us to fight one another
or to risk our own lives or worse—our souls? Is this natural that man should turn
upon one another and seek to enslave or be enslaved? Perhaps yes, when Candide
roamed the streets of El Dorado, he found that man’s desire was to constantly
distinguish himself from others. Then why, in the pursuit of doing so, does man
become nothing but an automaton chasing material possessions and honors that do
nothing but diminish his spirit? Perhaps they are right that the majority of mankind
differs little from dogs in the sense that most want a master to serve. But that is not
for us, and thus their natural and divine truths are nothing but lies, trying to deceive
us into trading our ‘subjective value’ for their ‘objective value.’ But we, as
Nietzsche’s Zarathustra prophesized, stand at the doorway to finding our own truths,
to see with our own eyes, to dream with our own minds. Then the true immortality
of the soul will be revealed, and we shall rise to our own destinies.”

Here the man’s sermon ended, and the group wordlessly each took some
article, such as a watch or earrings, placed it into a metal wastebasket, and then the
articles were set on fire, supposedly to represent their growing detachment from
society. The fact that this appeared an established tradition immediately struck the
stranger as hypocritical, and he smiled to himself as the group began to disperse. He
was tall, fairly handsome, with dark features that seemed somehow artificially
enhanced. He had an intelligent air about him, and he wore a rather jovial, playful expression. When the room emptied, he spoke.

“That was beautiful, like a work of art.”

“The truth is not beautiful, it is sublime,” the man answered in a dignified tone.

“Oh, now come, Boethius, that was not all truth, after all, from a subjective point of view, it does not exist,” he said and chuckled just a bit. “I mean all of those references to philosophers were surely personal interpretations—why should they listen to you?”

“You liked those, did you? It’s just a personal touch, add a few names that these people have heard of, but most likely have no idea about, and you are so much more persuasive. Remember, these are new recruits, they need such tricks until they can begin to think for themselves and are set free.”

As the man spoke, he went about the room cleaning up and doing his best to show that he thought his guest little more than an annoyance.

“I don’t think you are setting people free at all. Quite the opposite, I’m sure you will only exaggerate their misfortunes.”

“Then why hang around here? So you can receive some base feeling of superiority?”

“I only do as is natural,” he said with a smile and a slight bow. “But how do you expect to carry out your plan, if you have created some army of individuals, how can you still command them?”
“I will only suggest what they will feel compelled to do anyway. The logic of it will overwhelm them.”

“But once again, we are not talking about logic here. That Man cannot live by bread alone is a far greater truism than anything you have said here today. So once you strip these people of all ability to make sense of their unfortunate lives, it is probable that many will give up all sense of purpose and hope in their lives.”

“I will give them something to sustain them until the appointed time. Well then, again, I ask you—if I am so dangerous, why do you just hang around here? Why don’t you bring some of your masters upon us?”

“I too have no master, though I at least seem to have benefited from such an arrangement. But I don’t think you’re as dangerous as you think you are. If I thought anyone innocent would get hurt, I would put an end to your activities.”

“So potent are you? I can’t say I’m very worried about you either. But aren’t these poor unfortunate people—whom I am enlightening, but you say brainwashing—aren’t these people innocent?”

“No if they follow you.”

This taunting and baiting had clearly gotten to Boethius, and now he finally unleashed his temper.

“You ass, what is it that you know? I will not have you coming down here to gawk and criticize me. I will not have it! Look at yourself with the same scrutiny, and you will find plenty to criticize. Nothing about you is real at all. You hide
behind a personality and a name that are no more than gimmicks. Calvin
Johnson…of course, your namesake preached a doctrine of exceptionalism too.”

“Yes, but more importantly, he brought people’s attention to their ethics.”

“And is that what you do?”

“I think so, yes. I do not, at least, do as you do and make people forget about ethics altogether. And as long as we are talking about namesakes—how much consolation has your philosophy given you?”

“That’s it! Get out, get out now, or I’ll…” Boethius roared.

“What will you do?” Calvin asked.

“I’ll show you that I’m much more dangerous than you expect.”

There was something in this last statement to make Calvin believe him, and he turned suddenly to leave the room. He stopped at the doorway, as if remembering something.

“Oh, it looks like your doctor did it this morning. Isn’t that the sign you’ve been waiting for?”

“Where did you hear that? On the news? I did too, one report said he took three innocent people with him as well. Now does that sound like the doctor? No, it is all lies.

I would not believe anything I hear on the news…especially when I know who benefits from it. No, the doctor promised me an eye witness and, even then, it is at a time of my choosing.”

“Well, you will keep me informed, won’t you?”
“Absolutely not.”

“Ah, but don’t you want something from me?”

“When I go, I don’t care how you paint me, I just want you to be accurate about my adversaries. Expose them, and I think you know the service you will be doing.”

Calvin nodded and slipped out of the room. Boethius went to the window to shut it, but suddenly gave the middle finger, apparently, to the second floor of apartment building across the street which could be seen clearly at that angle. While grumbling to himself, he finished cleaning up, turned off the light and then went upstairs.

Boethius was born Jared Rosen to an aging couple who frankly found him a surprise, believing themselves to be too old to still procreate. They were good people, simple to the point of boring. They lavished Jared with toys and gadgets, and provided him with the best education, but in many ways they were too set in their ways to change much in accommodating to life with a child. Jared’s father had lived more than half a century, his mother somewhat less, and neither had much of an adaptable character to begin with. Jared had neither fond memories nor resentment against his parents; he was, like they were, ambivalent.

He went to college and earned a Master’s degree in Philosophy in as many years as most of his friends took for a Bachelor’s degree. He was an exceptionally good student, but he sometimes worried, wondering what else he might be good at,
as no marketable talents immediately sprang to his mind. How was he to make money and survive? Surely, Philosophy is not a well paying job; at least, not since Aristotle tutored Alexander the Great. After graduating, he found himself traveling the country following a music band whom his friends loved, and he thought was OK. This seemed to be a continuous trend separating him from his comrades. He found it extremely difficult, as they pointed out, to “get in the groove.” He found that he took little delight in the dancing, the surrendering to the music and the moment, which those scenes are about. Finally, he began openly to ridicule the clothing, the lingo, and the other peculiarities of hippy culture. Perhaps the only aspect he had a fondness for were the psychedelics. Soon, feeling the gathering distance between himself and those with whom he was traveling, he left the tour in California.

He set off on the road for another few years, had some good experiences and some thoroughly bad ones as well. He ran into many of the same problems of feeling isolated from others that he had before, and he found that the common destitution he shared with his comrades did not bridge the gap. Besides, he was not really destitute like they were. He had his parents, whom he relied on quite often, even though it hurt his pride to do so. Eventually, he sank into a deep, prolonged depression, much of which was clouded and augmented with drink. He continued to sink into himself until he could not longer stand it. One day, he arrived at his parents’ house, exhausted and sick. He locked himself in his room for almost a week, emerging only like a ghost sent to terrify his parents. For the following month, he stayed at home, leading a quiet, uneventful life, like his parents, who were
now retired. At the end of this period, he set out one day, and when he returned, he
announced the most unlikely thing his parents could have imagined to come out of
his mouth—he had joined the army.

This was just after the First Gulf War. He took to military life, though he felt
like he nearly died going through boot camp in the shape he was in. But he emerged
a strong, confident young man, without a trace of his former self. His first
engagement was Somalia, which despite the unfortunate results, he thought
represented the United States’ benevolence, in being willing to risk their own lives to
stem a previously unmitigated human disaster. His only regret was that the U.S.
failed to kill the warlord Aidid and left before the country was stable. He served in
Bosnia and later in Kosovo, again proud of his government, his military, and his
service. He had the same brilliant career in the military that he had in academia, but
now he was even more sure of himself. Then came the Second Gulf War.

Almost from the beginning, he could sense there was something different
about the war. His mind during this time began to change. Perhaps it was all the
clear conflicts of interest that he saw behind it: that companies formerly run by
government officials were greedily sucking up the profits of death, that it was poorly
planned and ineptly executed, or that a fundamental breakdown occurred when
prisoners were held in legal limbo, extradited to countries infamous for their practice
of torture, or, in some cases, tortured by Americans themselves. His depression
returned, now many times worse, and began eating away at him daily. The
confusion that surrounded that war, at first, only enhanced his zeal for doing the right
thing, but soon it became apparent, even to him, that he did not know what the right thing was. This became clear when he was arrested for prisoner abuse, tried, and sentenced to five years in prison. One of his crimes that received particular attention in the media was that he had jogged prisoners suspected of terrorism blindfolded with hands cuffed behind their back and a choke leash around their neck. Sometimes he would run the prisoner straight into a wall, or he might suddenly yank the choke chain, not so much to choke the prisoner, but to inspire a constant state of terror. It was his fondness for using a taser that had landed him in prison. To the end, he was one of the few unrepentant soldiers of those who were tried. He claimed that he had only been following official—though ambiguously worded—policies, ones that were followed by private interrogators with impunity. Regardless, he felt he was abandoned by the administration that sent him to war and the army with whom he had gone.

Five years for a bitter mind last much longer when one has only to brood over perceived injustices and a newfound capacity for cruelty. A military prison has the distinction from a normal prison mostly in that the prisoners are largely protected from the rape and violence that appear to be so commonplace in American prisons and so accepted by the public, that the only place it receives mention is in comedy. If he had been subjected to such experiences, it would have been probable that Jared would have been released from prison not just angry, but also insane. As it was, it had become clear that despite his intelligence, something had been knocked loose in Jared’s mind, possibly evidenced when he legally changed his name to Boethius. He
had read relentlessly in prison, worked out a great deal, even studied law, but upon
his release, he sank fairly quickly into depravity and despair. That the American
prison system had its roots in the Quaker moral concept of penitence is no secret, but
if there is any moral component of modern prisons, it is the noticeable absence of
any ethics except that of revenge. Boethius, hardened by having suffered for but
never having contemplated his actions, took to the ethic of revenge with a passion,
and it was perhaps only the allure of revenge that drew him again into sobriety and
battle.

For a few years, he traveled the country as he had in his youth, walking or
hitchhiking, subsisting mainly through drug-trafficking and begging. Near Fresno,
he was arrested by federal drug-enforcement agents for “possession with intent to
sell.” Looking at another span of jail time, he decided to work for the feds but found
an unexpected opportunity here. It was a well-known fact in the drug circles that at
the same time the federal government was cracking down on medical marijuana, the
streets were being flooded with a host of much more addictive and debilitating drugs
such as Oxycotton. He saw the same conflicts of interest here that sickened his
stomach, but he didn’t expect that it went as far as some agents actually being paid to
flood the market with these drugs in order to “inspire confidence” from their buyers
and then to arrest them for street produced or trafficked drugs. Working as a double-
agent, he collected information on his handlers’ own illicit side-actions, even getting
drug-dealers to wear a wire when dealing with the agents. He then contacted several
journalists and later was contacted by Calvin Johnson who had been working on a
similar story. Before the agents made any official arrests, the media had a circus, playing tapes of now identified federal agents receiving bribes, distributing pharmaceuticals, and generally showing a crass disregard for both the laws of this country and human compassion. The government’s response was that this had all been a guise to bring down a large marijuana smuggling ring and went after the papers and journalists for outing undercover agents. This, in light of the evidence against them, only made matters worse, and for a brief period there was a consideration by federal drug Czars that some legal drugs might be much worse than marijuana. However, as the lobbying power and money of private citizens groups were, in this case, stacked against multinational pharmaceutical companies, the end result was fairly predictable.

Boethius largely disappeared after this but also changed a great deal. He was, from this period on completely sober and never again begged or sold drugs. He was industrious in making a living, having learned a million different skills in the army, but he would not sign a contract, nor would he put his name on any piece of paper whether it be for housing or to sign a check. He was thought of by his neighbors as odd, but quiet, a poor man living simply and humbly. The only contact he managed to keep from his former life was that of Calvin, for their interests coincided from time to time. It was notable that both men experienced the same event but drew very different conclusions. Boethius reaffirmed a fairly entrenched belief that life was power and the most effective way to power, to the realization of the will, was to manipulate the minds, not the lifestyles, of others. A spectrum of individuals could
exist harmoniously together, if united by a common purpose and, most importantly, he controlled that purpose. Calvin, on the other hand, chose to surrender power by informing others, rather than manipulating. His faith was that influence is far better gained through the argument than the rhetoric. Nevertheless, when the two men wanted the same thing (which was not very often), each benefited immensely from the other’s work and knowledge. This was the first time they had kept in such close contact, while having a serious divergence in purpose and the struggle between the two was palpable.
Chapter 8

Daniel and Rose finally met. When they did, they knew the love they had for one another. It was a self-less love, where one would like but does not need reciprocation, where one only wants to give, where one is truly there for the other person’s happiness. You can tell what type of love is in a relationship by backrubs. If a person wants to give a backrub as much or even more than getting a backrub—that is the right type of love, the love you want. It is self-less love. There was both a great joy and great sadness in this meeting, for although Daniel wanted to marry Rose, to lift her burdens, to protect and shelter her from the harsh world and then to love, embrace, dance, hear, see, and feel all the beauty of life with this woman, and she felt and wanted exactly the same with him, they both had a feeling that they would not be together longer. Daniel knew it because he was beginning to see where his life was taking him, and Rose felt it because she could see that the life before her would be one with Daniel’s spirit, but not his body.

They embraced and kissed. They melted into each other, their hearts pounding, their sweat pouring, their tears of joy streaming into one river of love. They rolled in each other’s arms on the grass of the park where they had met. And while they were holding, kissing, loving, their minds created a song. Here is how it went:

“Let me rest a little while in your setting sun, the last few miles I’ve been overcome, how sweet it would be to stay and rest with you.”
Go down by the creek, take a walk in the woods, remember that we’re young, if we only could spend some time breathing deep again.

We’re so tired of hanging out in haunts of ghosts and ghouls, we’ve been planting these fields, waiting for yields, it’s time to lay down our tools.

And rest a little while in the sweet country air, talk with each other and put flowers in our hair, we’ve been waiting so long to take each other in.

We’re so tired of being lost and forgetting what we’re supposed to find, we’ve been walking these roads, looking for a home and we’ve got one thing on our mind…. *

And that’s to rest so true and lay down, wrestle with each other at the soft green ground, spend some time just being with each other.

And when we’ve both grown old, we’ll sit with each other and have our stories told, laugh about the times when we needed so bad to rest a little while.

Let me rest with you, Daniel. Let me rest with you, Rose”

If only moments like that filled the entirety of our days then we might all find rest and peace, but Daniel and Rose had only been lying with one another for an hour when Luke and Gavin came upon them.

“We’re going to be late for the rally,” Luke said.

“I believe it’s called a peace march,” Gavin said jokingly, as he pretended to march in place.

“I don’t think there will be much peace there,” Daniel said.
“I love you all,” Rose said. “And so let us walk through the furnace together.”

Before the rally, there was a pre-rally of oppositional forces that wanted to get in the first say, and before that, there was a ghastly construction of fences and barricades set up by the police to contain the day’s events. It would prove most unfortunate that these barricades would have both the first and the last say in the day’s events.

Luke began handing out laminated cards.

“These V.I.P. passes,” he was saying, “…are good for one free clubbing or a night in jail, your choice, but they will also get you past the check points early and backstage with the speakers when we get there. It’s a little more spacious and comfortable there, but you’re welcome to go out with the crowd if you want. I speak first, very briefly, and then give an address towards the end. The Mayor and Governor managed to finagle their way to the keynote addresses, and their bandwagoners. Well, better on the wagon than off. Once, we go in, I’ve got some things I’ve got to help coordinate, so you’ll forgive me if I’m absent.”

“Oh, course, your professorship,” Gavin replied with a smile, as he took the pass. Luke smiled, he liked this new title, better than “your lordship of learning” or “ye of most esteem-able intelligence,” which Gavin had used with some frequency.

They started walking, talking loudly and enjoying the bright sunshine that was just now reaching over the building tops. Much of downtown was still masked in shadow, but there was activity, like a hive stirred up. Already chants were being
raised by the “pro-war” advocates; they considered themselves not pro-war, but pro-
government. There were some thousand or so people corralled into a separate
protest zone, closed-off from main area by means of a weak chain-link fence, quite
different from that of the perimeter which seemed set to withstand a cavalry charge.
There may truly have been some cause for concern, for the whole protest zone,
stretching several blocks, was filled with a tension that had arrived before the main
crowd. Going into this tempest, Daniel felt slightly guilty about his reason for
attending, though he did not agree with the current war, in fact he very much hated
war of any kind, but he felt that he was there for a specific, personal reason.

Rose and another girl, whom she met going to the event, made the surprising
turn of becoming quite friendly and were right now engaged in a humorous
conversation about exposing their breasts at the rally, as some girls do at heavy metal
concerts. Gavin was eagerly supporting this plan of action, and Daniel was laughing,
feeling for the first time in many days, a sense of relaxation spill over him. He had
been in San Fran now for six days, but this was his first visit to the downtown area
during the daytime, and he was looking about, taking in all that he could. Rose was
so bound in conversation that she failed to see her sister, who was standing in a small
crowd, not more than twenty yards away. Daniel, however, saw Freya and instantly
knew that she was Rose’s sister and saw what was holding her attention. His jaw
literally dropped, and he stood for a minute with his mouth gaping.
“Oh my God, that’s him. That’s the man from the alley, from the hospital!” Daniel exclaimed, pointing at the curiously dressed man with a lion’s mane of white hair.


“I didn’t save anyone,” he said with false modesty, “…but yes he’s the one, I’m sure.”

“That guy’s a kook,” Gavin said. “I’ve seen him down here before, preaching the coming destruction and nonsense like that.”

“I want to hear what he’s saying,” Daniel said.

“Yeah, let’s go,” Gavin said enthusiastically, though he had just denounced the fellow.

“I’ve got to get to the rally, I’m late as it is,” Luke announced.

“Why don’t we go with Luke, and we’ll catch up with you boys soon,” Rose suggested. Daniel did not want to upset Rose and so said nothing, giving her only a hug and a promise to find them.

It was agreed, Luke and the girls left, and Daniel and Gavin moved closer. They stopped about five feet from the outer ring that had formed around Boethius. He was speaking:

“…we are here to protest the false protests! They will not stop the war, nor will they prevent the next one. And the buffoons, the crass cheerleaders of death, well, they are forever in prison. Soon you shall demonstrate your ultimate freedom. Soon we shall reach the ‘tipping point’ where mankind will devour itself, except for
those who have long refused the banquet. You are soldiers, you are the freedom fighters that will lead that small, but ultimately successful, group of fellow humans out of their enslavement and in doing so, you will be the saints responsible for the new civilization that rises from the ashes of the old…"

Boethius went on, but suddenly Gavin was no longer listening. He had seen Freya, and he got Daniel’s attention.

“That’s Rose’s sister!” Gavin said, pointing out the young girl.

“I know,” Daniel said, and it did not occur to him that Daniel had never seen Rose’s sister before.

The two boys maneuvered around the circle, and Gavin laid his hand on Freya’s shoulder. It startled her, but seeing who it was, she allowed herself to be led away from the group. Boethius, meanwhile, had noticed this disturbance in his flock, recognized Daniel at once, but went on speaking even more emphatically (and illogically, thought Daniel) than before. When they had gotten far enough away, Daniel turned his attention to study Freya. She looked so little like Rose, except for that shock of hair, running from the center and pulled straight back, that was as blond as Rose’s.

Gavin and Daniel had muscled their way through the crowd to Freya.

“Why are you listening to this garbage?” Gavin asked, with all the sternness of a father. “That stuff will rot your brain, it’s like drugs for the morbidly sober.”
Freya, not understanding this last statement at all, answered, “It’s not
garbage, it’s philosophy!”

Gavin looked to Daniel, who replied, “That is not philosophy. It sounded
like superstitious mumbo-jumbo. He did not make one concrete argument much less
a coherent statement.”

“If you heard it in a church, or if there was a funny little cross around his
neck, everyone would applaud him as a holy-man. In fact, he’s…” Freya, who had
obviously prepared this defense long ago, would have gone on, but Daniel
interrupted.

“What was that ‘demonstration of your freedom’ he was talking about?”

“I can’t say. I took a vow of secrecy.”

“Hmm, you took a vow of secrecy. That doesn’t seem to jive very well with
being a ‘saint for the cause of freedom.’ I mean, shouldn’t you be telling everyone
your secret, if you wish to set them free?” Daniel had suddenly become very
worried about this girl, for he didn’t like the sound of this mysterious plan to which
the speaker had repeatedly referred.

“I don’t understand,” Freya replied.

“Look Gavin’s right, you don’t need this stuff. It doesn’t make any sense.
Why don’t you come to the rally with us? Your sister will be there.”

Freya was scared that Rose would be told of this, when it dawned on her who
she was talking to. “You’re Daniel, I’ve read… I mean, Rose has talked about you.”
“It’s nice to meet you, Freya.” Daniel replied, having also heard something from Rose about this young girl. “Why don’t you come with us? We can get you backstage.”

Freya was about to utter her refusal when suddenly something quite remarkable happened. A group of policemen had pushed through to Boethius and began arresting him. He was complying with his body, but his mouth began sending incendiary pleas of help from this abuse. His followers had reformed a ring around their leader, but stood there calmly with looks of scorn on their faces. Some passers-by, going towards the rally, were attracted by the arrest and now began shouting things to the police.

“What has he done? He was just talking, I saw him, just talking!” one cried.

“Yes, he was just talking, I heard it. Nonsense, of course, but just speaking,” agreed an older gentleman, who was heard by few.

“Free speech! There taking away our rights!” yelled another towards a greater audience.

“What we can’t speak our minds? This is America, you fucking pigs!” screamed a third in a menacing tone and, thus, setting things in motion.

One of the four officers, who was not attached to Boethius, stepped out with a taser-gun and pointed it at the man who had just screamed this insult. In doing so, the crowd instantly grew twice as thick; people going to the rally swarmed to see this opening ceremony, as it would be later called in the press. Daniel, Gavin, and Freya were pushed into the throng. Boethius, much encouraged, was now speaking loudly,
but definitively, pleading his case to an ever larger crowd. More people began yelling insults.

“First you arrest him, for just speaking, now you’re going to shoot the other guy,” yelled someone obviously believing this to be a real gun, that was in its holster and had not come out yet.

“What’s the charge? Tell us what he’s charged with” said a female voice, with obviously a good deal more sense than most of the crowd.

“He’s being arrested for ‘inciting a riot’!” the officer with the taser responded.

This, of course, was not in the least bit true—Boethius’s followers were standing most still and even now were not just passively surrounding their leader, they were also protecting the police from the crowd.

The man who had a taser pointed at him moved forward defiantly and screamed, “He didn’t start any riot. You did by arresting him for just speaking.” And then, as an after thought, added: “You goddamn, fucking pigs.”

He had once been arrested and sent to jail for drug possession. The crack had been planted on him; though he had been high at the time, the drugs that had sent him to prison had come straight out of a narcotic officer’s pocket and into his. He could not resist the temptation now that he felt the tables had turned, and power was now in a weakened position.

He yelled once more, “I say we get these fucking cops, we’re not going to let them take him!” With that he broke through the ring.
No one saw the dart fly, but everyone saw the man collapse twitching on ground. Whether it was self-defense or not, it was a bad mistake. Someone threw a bottle, and it hit the officer in the face. Blood began to gush from above his eye. More objects and insults were being hurled in, some of which were hitting Boethius, who was now laughing madly and screaming orders to his followers.

“Don’t break ranks, my disciples, hold for a moment, we have almost won. He, he, he!”

It was truly a mad sight. Gavin and Daniel had linked arms with Freya in the middle. They were being jostled and were fighting back for space, so that their ward might not be crushed. The police, huddled under a hail of trash, were calling for back-up which could not hope to reach them in time. The one officer stood like a statue with his taser outstretched, allowing rubbish to hit him with out the slightest flinch. There was blood in his eyes.

“We’ve got to get out of here,” Gavin called to Daniel, but Daniel was already walking away.

He turned back and yelled, “Get Freya out of here,”

But there was no place to go. The crowd, now over a hundred strong, was packed into the small courtyard and was pulsing like a ruptured heart. Two more people, who had broken through the ring of disciples, were tasered unconscious. The officer cuffed them with plastic ties in less than a minute and upon rising drew his gun and pointed it in the air. Another younger officer rushed to him. There was chaos everywhere.
Daniel stood up on a concrete flower pedestal that towered over all.

“Stop!” he commanded.

His voice could not have been any louder than any others’ in the crowd, but the effect was amazing. Everyone literally came to a halt.

“Take time to think…not with anger, but with compassion. Nobody wants this.” Daniel’s words spilled from his mouth as though it was a tangible wave of calmness, parting a sea and letting just enough sensibility through to avoid a disaster.

The crowd hummed and pulsed, radiating energy that could either explode or dissipate. The police had a moment to plan. Two officers in particular seemed to be in a discussion about what they were to do. The older of the two was holding a gun so tightly that his fingers were white.

“Are you crazy? You shoot that, and you’ll either start a stampede, or they’ll tear us apart!”

“What do you suggest we do?” the officer asked with a sarcastic smile, as if a show of brute force was the only commonsense remedy applicable to nearly every situation.

“Release him. Release him, and we’ll take the fight out of the crowd.”

“You’re the one who’s crazy. We have orders from DHS to take this guy in, before the rally. Are you going to answer for it, if we release him?”

“Hell, yeah, I will. I don’t think you realize how dangerous a situation we’re in.”

“I don’t think you realize how many bullets this gun holds!”
“What?! You’re going to shoot these people? You are an idiot. How have you managed to stay on the force fifteen years?” And saying this, he strode away from the officer, who was actually his superior in rank, before the man could utter another word. The younger officer went up to Boethius, who suddenly settled down and glowered at the man in front of him.

“If we release you, will you tell the crowd to disperse?”

“I don’t control the crowd, you fool.”

“If I release you, you will disperse with your people immediately. Is that understood?”

Boethius, however, now nodded his consent. Victory had been his that day. He was released to the enormous cheering of the crowd who had so much invested in this matter, being as they themselves were going to practice their right to public speech. Boethius led his followers away in an orderly procession, Freya stayed with the boys. Soon the crowd passed on, not bothering with the tasered man who was still in custody. They were defending speech not aggression. Daniel got down from the pedestal, and no one paid any attention to him, as if he had never been there.

He looked at Gavin, then at Freya, and with a big sigh said, “Well, that was something, let’s get to the rally and hope it’s nothing like this.”

When they arrived at the rally, news of this averted riot had already reached the ears of the rally’s organizers. The chief of police wanted to cancel the rally and send the ten thousand or so protestors who had already arrived, back home. Luke
would not hear of it, more importantly, the mayor would not hear of it, and as the governor was due to speak in just a few hours, the deal was set, the rally was inevitable. Luke paced back and forth, obviously upset when Daniel related what had happened. He did not mention that Freya was with Boethius when they found her, and for that, he gained her gratitude. Rose was much surprised and relieved. There was such a din from in front of the stage that Daniel had to speak very loudly.

“Those sheep! Can’t they come up with anything better than ‘America doesn’t need traitors’?” Luke complained. “I mean, really, didn’t slogans used to be catchy?”

“Uhh! You better not get a counter-chant going. I hate chanting competitions, unless it’s the ‘we got spirit’ one.”

But Gavin’s joke was not well-received. There was too much tension and a dark brooding had come over Luke. The rest were preoccupied looking about at the security guards and fortifications separating backstage from the front. There was something too much, too incongruous here with the messages of peace and compassion that were supposed to be the main fare of the day.

“This all seems a little over the top,” Daniel said, but his voice too, had fallen on deaf ears. He looked at Rose, who had dropped her careless banter with Tasha her new friend and was now worriedly standing beside her sister, with looks of pain and lightheadedness crossing her face. Once, she even stumbled and, unbeknownst to anyone but him, looked like she was about to faint at any moment. He moved behind her instinctively in case his protection was needed to prevent a
meeting with the pavement, but at that moment a woman came to announce that Luke was needed to start the festivities. He protested that because of security the pro-war camp still held numerical superiority and wanted to wait until the rest of the peace marchers arrived. He was overruled by the other organizers and so went to do his duty. Luke was wrong, however, about the numbers. The crowd that had gathered was simply beyond estimation. It was a gathering of flesh, force, and fury. Luke for a moment really did consider pulling the plug, sabotaging the very rally that he had helped organize, simply because he, like Daniel, felt the premonition of the day’s doom. Yet he went forward to speak to the crowd for he thought he had no choice but to proceed.

In a day of so many mistakes, this was yet another one. The crowd, having been impeded by extra-careful security checks, was out of patience as their personals were rummaged through and examined without delicacy. When the lines had grown several blocks long, stopping traffic on streets thought to be outside the protest’s area of influence, a sort of grumbling began that the police themselves were trying to sabotage the rally. Rumors of the standoff, not two hours ago, were greatly exaggerated, and the crowd became further distempered. When the sound of Luke’s amplified voice came roaring from inside, a sort of crush began, as one might expect at a rock concert. The police restored order, but so clearly outnumbered and unprepared for the mounting chaos, they began to let people through with the only most cursory checks, in hopes of relieving the pressure.
Luke’s address had been most moderate, mainly focusing on the discipline and self-control that was needed not only for safety, but so that the rally could be a most effectual political statement. He ended, however, by briefly unleashing his oratory skills in an impassioned denunciation of the war and a call for “people power” to rise up and “forever dismantle the military-industrial complex that has raped democracy and sent her bastard children to plunder and control the world’s resources.”

Upon hearing such fiery rhetoric, a cheering rose from the crowd, now maybe 100,000 strong, that was so deafening and terrifying in its own right, that the 20,000 or so pro-government supporters fell silent in their side of the cage. The next few speakers were the least moderate and the most incendiary, for these were the foot-soldiers activists, who had many times before gone to prison for their convictions, who spent days depressed (perhaps rightly) by the news and nights organizing a force which they believed would lead to a better world. But on that day, the compassion and concern for the general welfare that these people undoubtedly held was not to be heard.

Had something not been torn that day, perhaps the Social Contract, perhaps the fabric of American society, so familiar with the tears that occur when promised liberties are replaced by greedy realities. It would be mended again, stitched with a sturdier, more just thread, but would the end result be a strengthened or weakened cloth? Backstage, Daniel and his friends looked out on the crowd in amazement, now at 400,000, now 500,000, roaring and pulsing, both inside and out, for the police
had stopped entrance to the protest zone with claims of overcapacity. There seemed not to be a street in San Francisco that day that was not filled with people, as though the nation itself had gathered. Daniel saw some anti-war and pro-war protestors throwing bottles and other items at and over the security barrier that separated them. Some pro-war supporters, now grossly outnumbered, began to wish that they had not come that day, for the situation seemed to be rapidly getting out of control. The mob, as well as the government, may be a weapon against free-speech, and this was such a time.

Daniel found Luke and pointed out the volley of missiles passing between the protestors. Some on each side were hurt and visibly bleeding. Luke rushed off to the stage. The speaker, well aware of what was going on, was now in a fury. He strode up and down the stage, his loud voice thundering from his small stature. Never had he spoken before so many, never had he commanded the emotions of such a vast body; they were his, and he was drunk on it. Luke tried to catch up with him and take the microphone, in a composed, non-reactionary way, but the man eluded him and then began to wildly accuse Luke of being in collusion with the forces of “evil, the evil that wishes to take speech from the good!”

This was too much! It is one thing for a politician to loosely throw around the terms of “good and evil,” so as to utterly degrade their effect and meaning, but it was quite another thing for someone, who was trying to provide some type of sensible opposition and lead people into conscionable action to the apply such terms to his own camp. The plug was pulled on him, thus defeated, he slunk off stage, and
Luke, having regained the microphone, was plugged back in and now began a
desperate attempt to avert disaster. He called the entire crowd’s attention to the
ruffians engaged in their throwing battle and shamed them into stopping. He sent
medical personnel to remove the wounded and gained the crowd’s cooperation. He
then began an angry, but effectual, lecture on why it was necessary to remain
peaceful while protesting, why it was necessary to maintain order so as not to
surrender moral authority to the other side. And he was nearly successful at getting
the rally back on the right track, when suddenly a scuffle began in the far left-hand
corner, nearly obscured from the stage by a statue.

Luke demanded that the fighting stop, but this time he was to no avail. How
it started, no one will ever know. One frequently held story was that the police
began arresting a group of teens who were smoking a joint, and the teens cried for
help from the other protestors. The official police version denied that they would
have ever arrested someone on such a petty crime, given what was going on at the
time. One version claimed that the police saw a man with a gun (or by some
accounts a bomb), and the police had interceded for public safety. No gun or bomb
was ever found, however. Still other versions, from protestors outside the barrier,
said that the police were breaking up a fight and were attacked in doing so. An
independent report noted that the police had been ordered to clear an exit so that
reinforcements and ambulances could arrive, and surmised that the police had been
too zealous in executing this order. Whatever the truth, this was a time when history
and the historian’s perspective became one. Yet, of what happened next, there could be no doubt.

The fight soon exploded. Cops began beating their attackers with riot clubs (two protestors were later found dead, with their heads bashed in), but these officers were soon overwhelmed and had their clubs turned against them. One officer was later found dead here as well. Suddenly, a gunshot went off, the trigger-happy officer finally had his way, and, true enough, a stampede began. Many more fell to the ground dead and wounded. Hundreds were injured, and ten more protestors lost their lives in this first crush. Daniel and those backstage looked on horrified, but with safety, as the crowd had not thought to relieve its pressure by breaking through the barriers protecting that area. When again some type of order began forming, crushed bodies were lifted to surf through the crowd, at first to get them to an ambulance, and then, when the crowd realized they were dead, their bodies became the focus of an uprising. Such scenes, though they have happened in America more than once, are usually obliterated from the public consciousness so that it is believed that they only occur in third-world countries or in the fantasies of historians.

More police were attacked in retaliation for causing the crush. How dare they turn their guns on the American people, many asked in outrage. Some of the ruffians had taken the opportunity of this chaos to break down the barrier separating the two protesting groups. Now began a war on two fronts, but when the police turned water cannons on the crowd from several directions at once, the fighting within the crowd ceased, and one united front was unleashed. This was in the end
the crowd’s undoing. Like an infantry charge that sweeps through its opponent and leaves itself too strung out for defense, so too did the crowd rush past the police, relieving the great pressure that threatened to take many more lives, and allowing many to be arrested piecemeal. The arrests were nearly always arbitrary, the ruffians having escaped, it was the peaceful, the scared, the law-abiding, who were then rallied and thrown in jail, for someone would have to pay a penalty for this disaster. The blame fell solely to the rally’s organizers, but with nine dead and many hundred wounded, such a narrow view of culpability was hard for the public to swallow and harder to digest. Though there would be more than enough talking-heads, columnists, politicians, and activists to provide answers, no one ever seemed to get to the truth of the simple question: How did this happen?

For Daniel, his friends, and the other actors in this drama, the greater question was: What is going to happen next? As they left the rally, all felt there was something ominous that day, symbolizing something much greater than the event itself. They looked to Daniel, who was not the smartest, the most charismatic, the most beautiful, or the happiest of the group, to interpret this mystery, for in him they all saw the most sensitive and the most thoughtful man. And he, rising to this occasion, began a long mystical speech about the “trials of justice and meaning” that had begun to take place in the modern world, when faith and thought, if not united, would tear each other apart, and when man would reach a point where he could no longer live in a world without fully participating. No one really knew what he said, he did not really know himself, for he spoke as if from a dream, but the effect of the
speech was to calm their nerves and to make them believe that at least Daniel was presenting a choice of the future, rather than a description of it.

The city had ground to a halt, so they walked home, now in silence. Rose nearly passed out while walking. Daniel, who had been walking close, caught her. Tasha and Freya fretted and wanted to get her to a hospital, but when Rose had gained her strength, she refused. They were able to get her home safely and said goodbye. Daniel kissed Rose one last time and then left with Luke and Gavin. It was a sad day, and when they all had parted, it seemed sadder.
On a hot, humid morning, with dark low-flying clouds that promised rain, a young man stood on the outskirts of a large plaza, smoking a clove cigarette. He was dressed very simply; his clothes were loose fitting, plain, without writing or insignias, and immaculately white. His feet were strapped into sandals, and he wore no hat, but in this heat, his black wavy hair was already matted to his head with sweat. At the very center of plaza there was a statue of a man holding a rifle, facing east with a fierce expression. The statue was not old, but it had turned completely black by the exhaust of the encircling traffic. Beneath the statue, there was a plaque stating that this man, named “Aguinaldo,” had died around the turn of last century as a freedom fighter and Filipino patriot. The man stared at the statue, as if expecting it to step off its pedestal and walk away. He checked his watch. It was still early, only taxi drivers and vendors of fruit and fish, setting up their stalls, shared this morning with him. In another hour, it would be so crowded that it might take 10 minutes to cross the plaza, and then one would have to deal with the perilous driving of army jeeps, painted, decorated, and then used as private bus-lines.

The plaza served as the center of Cebu City, designated only by the concentration of businesses, both foreign and domestic, and the only two financial institutions remaining on the island. Five years earlier Cebu, together with Negros and Mindanao, had declared themselves independent from the Philippines, and a bloody war had devastated much of the islands. However, Cebu City had remained
largely intact if only because the city was one large compact slum, nearly impenetrable and so closely-knit that it was impossible to distinguish separatist areas from loyalist. Most of the inhabitants of Cebu City were loyalists, but they held some affinity for their rural brethren and frequently sheltered them from military raids. It is often a hard won battle to convince people, against their natural inclinations, that one owes loyalty to one’s government before one’s own neighbor, but rising ethnic and religious tensions had helped ease this illusion. There had been, over the last few decades, a large Muslim migration from Mindanao and even from Indonesia, as Cebu experienced a prolonged economic boom. It should be stated that when the war of succession had started, nearly all of the Muslim population were peaceful and as loyal as any of their fellow islanders; the religious overtones that the rebels preached were more or less a disguise for their piracy operations.

Once again, violence, greed, and all sorts of despicable crimes were being committed in the name of religion. Metaphorically, it was like the Crusades. When Saladin captured a city, he showed mercy on the Christian and Jewish inhabitants, while Richard the “Lion-Hearted” commanded the so-called Crusaders to slaughter the inhabitants of the captured Jerusalem until the streets ran with blood. How long did it take the Church to warp the wisdom of Jesus that “the Kingdom of Heaven is inside you” into doctrines that demanded that only through the Church, through other faulty and sometimes the least pious of souls, could one get to Heaven? Why is it that religion corrupts, distorts, and dements spirituality, so that messages of all faiths
that start with love, compassion, and tolerance, end up interpreted to have the exact opposite meanings?

When the Philippine government, which had suffered a popular military coup, outlawed the public worship of Islam as tantamount to piracy and insurrection, the lid blew off like an overwhelmed pressure cooker. Once the army had obliterated several Muslim villages, the rebel ranks began to swell; the ragtag group of pirates had been transformed into an effective and purposeful fighting machine. There was a bloody slaughter as each side committed atrocities, but the world at the time was preoccupied with larger conflicts that involved wealthier nations. The government forces were still too much for conventional warfare, the rebels were defeated, and Cebu was coerced back into the union. In the end, democracy was restored because the military, after being cited for disastrous policies, lost much of its support.

The war had officially ended two years ago, and there had been a conspicuous lack of violence and crime of all sorts on Cebu, but until recently, the city had received few foreigners. Tourists were taken straight to Mactan Island, just off the eastern shore. Businessmen were pampered and shielded from anything unsightly, but there was much Kaba Luna wanted to bring attention to. He had fought and rose quickly in the ranks of the rebel army, until he was effectively in charge of what remained, the other commanders being either dead or in prison. Kaba had delivered the last rival commander to the Philippine army in exchange for an amnesty for every fighter who laid down his arms. Then he had set about covertly
rebuilding his fighting force. The secret army that had emerged over the last two years was small but exceptionally well trained, cohesive, and, most importantly, fanatically devoted to their leader and their cause. Gone were the pirates and petty thugs, and in their place were merciless assassins, technology wizards, and propaganda masters.

Today, as Kaba Luna stood meditating on the statue of Aguinaldo, a group of investors from an American bank were being hosted by city officials with plans to re-develop Cebu’s wealth of mineral mines and the roads linking the city to the smaller towns and outposts. When the project had been unveiled in the local press, it was said that this alone could cut unemployment, recently running at over forty percent, in half. As much as 20 billion dollars would be added to the local economy over the next ten years, at which time the mines would reopen and finally reach a profitable capacity. Of course everyone, poor and rich alike, knew that the numbers would never come to account, and so not everyone supported this venture for a number of reasons. The mines were privately owned either by the investing companies or Filipino families that formed a belated aristocracy and lived on Luzon. The wages at the mines or in transport would be decided in order to stay competitive with the market, so that if it came to the crunch, it would be labor not the shareholders that would have to tighten their belts, or so read the fliers that were tacked up everywhere throughout the city, despite the illegality of being caught with one. Kaba was one who did not want these deals to go through. A man on a motorbike with a rickshaw sidecar pulled up in front Kaba. The man’s face was
terribly pockmarked, and his eyes looked sunken. He grinned with blackened teeth, and there was no sign of happiness in his smile.

“You’re late,” said Kaba.

“How could I be late for my destiny? As you have called it,” the man replied.

“Because it’s getting crowded, soon shops will open, and their meeting will be over. There are already more people around than we had wished!”

“Well, don’t you want to get out of here?

“No, you’d better get going. I want to see this through.”

“You are brave,” the man whispered.

“One day, I will be as brave as you,” Kaba said as he bent down to kiss the man on the forehead.

The man nodded and sped off directly across the plaza, passing the statue just inches to the right and narrowly missing a taxi that had pulled out from the far curb. He hit the sidewalk and then started straight up the steps leading to the bank. An armed guard fired at the motorcyclist and hit him several times, but still the cycle went on a few more yards and then exploded. Debris reached all the way to Kaba, who stood motionless, not even covering up after a piece of concrete cut his forehead. When the smoke cleared, the face of the bank had collapsed. Both guards, a taxi driver, a fruit vendor, and two street children were killed, but the foreigners and officials, who had been the target, were meeting in back at the time, and most of them survived. The cycle had exploded far too early.
Kaba watched this all. Once a commander who had fought bravely, putting his own life at the front lines for the cause, now he had stood in the background. This was his first act of true terrorism, where the object was not to defend against an aggressor, but to become the aggressor himself. He had always fought for the people, his people, the poor, the outcasts, the meek against the rich and powerful, but now he realized that he had caused the deaths of the very people he wished to protect. A dry, empty thirst entered his body, a feeling that he could drink forever and never be quenched. Here is the question of a man or woman who commits a crime, especially a crime of magnitude, and maintains a conscience about it: Does the person rationalize the crime, commit himself to a false doctrine, and continue down a path of increasing atrocity, or does the person reflect, feel penitent, wish sincerely to make up for their crime, and dedicate himself to doing just that?

Kaba walked, with tears of shame chalked by the dust, several blocks away from the plaza, hopped in a cab, and told the driver to take him out to Mactan Island. They made the bridge just before a roadblock was set up and slipped into a resort. The guards at the resort nodded them through the gate after recognizing Kaba. As he was returning to his room, he saw a fat German in nothing but a Speedo, passed out by the pool, an empty liquor bottle sat on the table next to him. The German had been to a strip club on the island and ordered a different girl each night. Kaba spit on the ground as he passed the drunken man. Back in his room, Kaba gathered his clothes, all of which seemed identical to what he was wearing, some money mostly in American bills, and a large journal. He opened the journal, wrote a short entry,
and then pulled out a sheet of scrap paper. He wrote a short message on it, folded it up, and carried it out to the German man, where he stuck it into the man’s wallet that was lying on the ground. The German left the next day after reading the note. Kaba then walked down to the beach, hailed a fisherman who agreed to take him out to one of the smaller, mostly uninhabited islands lying in between Cebu and Samar. Tourist went to these islands, but he expected a reprieve from that now. On his way to the island, he talked with the ship’s owner about needing supplies, food, and a tent. He bought all this, the man’s secrecy, and his loyalty by giving him as much as he would be likely to make in an entire year. He planned to pray and strictly fast for a week on the island, which in his already weakened condition could be very dangerous. Of this he was unconcerned; only capture worried him, for he knew not what he would do next.

While Daniel did not remember the day of his adoption, Kaba Luna did. He remembered playing a game of hide and seek with his brother in the sparsely sheltered courtyard of the old orphanage. His brother was hiding behind a fig tree growing along the stream that formed that back border of the property. He was still visible, but Kaba could recall, taking his time to circle around behind the tree, so as to scare his brother out. He did so, and the two raced, one chasing the other, amidst shrieks of laughter, back up towards the schoolhouse, where they had just been called. They went into the dark but cool room and sat on the old church pews that served instead of desks. The two boys instinctively grabbed their slate boards and
chalk and rushed to their seats, which were purposefully set apart from one another, still giggling and passing being “it” back and forth in a game of tag. One of the nuns walked in with two people, a tall white man with a funny moustache and a darker woman, who might have been Filipino but was built too voluptuously and was without a hint of Asiatic features.

At that time, his brother went by the name Gabriel and he by Jésus, names given to them at childbirth by their dying mother. Bringing them both into the world had been too much for her, so she passed them on to God’s care, at the old Spanish mission that now served as hospital and orphanage. As to their father, nothing was known, but it was obvious that they had Caucasian blood in them that did not come from their purely native mother. Gabriel, however, exhibited this tendency somewhat more than his brother being larger, slightly lighter, and having deep-set green eyes; aside from eye color, however, the two were almost identical in facial features. So it was not surprising, perhaps, that the couple that came into the room that day left with Gabriel and not Jésus. It was mere chance, either of the boys could have been brought to America. But Kaba had seen another boy fall in the yard and rushed out to help him. Already, at the age of three, these two boys showed the gift of caring and wanting to help to change the world.

And perhaps the orphanage, with so many children and more arriving all the time, could be forgiven for splitting the brothers up and not even mentioning their relationship to the prospective parents. Maybe they even forgot, being so busy and jumping at the chance to find a good home—and in America—for one of their wards.
But Kaba Luna did not judge many things with an eye for forgiveness and reconciliation, and later in life, only his memories of the kindness of the nuns and the one young priest, sent as a missionary yet acting as a doctor, that spared them from his broad-reaching wrath.

He lived for two more years at the old mission before being adopted by a wealthy Filipino couple. Miguel Cervantes was an aging action film star and his wife, Maria Lucientes, was a former beauty queen and model. They were retiring, and Miguel was going into private business, but his reputation and his finances had been badly damaged by a lifetime of hard living and several unsavory scandals. His wife had publicly fared much better, but her beauty had been fleeting, and her glamour was so much eroded that, when she married Miguel at the age of forty-two, it was widely considered that she was the lucky one in the deal. As well as financial ambitions, the two had political aspirations, which in the Philippines often go hand in hand. So it was decided that adopting a child would put some credibility back into their lives and, Maria hoped, provide something that was lacking in their marriage.

The child must be a boy, they reasoned, and he must be past infancy, for they couldn’t imagine changing diapers and waking up at all hours. He must be intelligent, healthy, quiet, and above all, obedient. These were the type of qualities they requested at the orphanage. The priest immediately suggested Jésus, who was intelligent, very quiet, never any trouble at all, and often very helpful. Plus, he was just at the upper limits of the age where he had a good chance of being adopted; this
might, therefore, have been his last chance. Miguel and Maria agreed with the choice and took him home that very day.

They lived on a huge plantation that straddled each side of the mountain ridge that divides Cebu. The plantation grew tropical fruits, coconuts, and, further down the hillsides, vast fields of corn. It was completely run by a foreman and a business manager, and was Miguel and Maria’s second home, their first being in Makati, on Luzon. It was designed to lend to a rustic air to their rejuvenated social lives. The two immediately took a liking to Jésus and he, to some degree, to them. Though he had never had parents, he was quite sure that they were not like Miguel and Maria. Nevertheless, they were fun, and life for a short time was very exciting. They ate meals together, at which his father drank a good deal of wine and was almost always in a jovial mood. Miguel liked to joke around with his son, and after lunch they would often go off to play or ride horses. Maria was a very preoccupied woman, who spent a good deal of time on the phone or entertaining guests, but at night she would read Jésus stories and tuck him in. Other than that, he was pretty much left on his own, a luxury he enjoyed immensely. Every day, he explored the plantation, wandering for miles through the lines of coconut and pineapple trees, across the fields of corn and the flooded rice paddies, climbing to lookouts from which he could see all the way to Negros. He became very well known to all the workers and their children, and he spent much of his time helping in the fields or having adventures when the other youths had free time. It was over this matter that Jésus and his new parents had their first falling out.
For the first year, Jésus traveled with his parents regularly. He was given fine clothes to dress in, and wherever they went, someone seemed to be there to take their picture. They went to various award ceremonies, mall openings, and political rallies, where Jésus’ only instructions were to keep quiet and smile a lot. In return, he was given extra affection, but this often lasted only as long as they were in the company of others. These occasions were often boring and stuffy, and it made little sense to Jésus why his parents attended these events, but he endured them quietly, his watchful eyes soaking up many oddities of adult behavior. He learned the distasteful facts of how adults speak to one another differently depending on their social position and how adults were continuously engaging each other in battles of power and deception. His father, the old actor, was himself a master of this art. He formed at a very young age the Nietzschian idea that all life is conflict and soon formed lasting notions as to who the major adversaries in this conflict were. One day, for instance, he was given a lesson in class that, even at his young age, he could understand and would never forget.

A television show had decided to do a shoot of the Cervantes family at their plantation. This just happened to coincide with the release of a whole product line, everything from formal wear to colognes to accessories, bearing Miguel and Maria’s name and which they were vigorously promoting. On that day, Jésus left the house early, having arranged to meet Miko and Joseph, children of one of the field workers, down by a creek that formed a large pool in one rocky gulch as it made its way to the ocean. His parents were very upset because they had expected to be filmed with
Jésus. They realized, however, that they had failed to mention the arrival of the filming crew to Miguel and were worried that he might not come home before evening, or worse, that he might come home in some embarrassing manner. That was exactly what happened. Miguel was giving a tour of his house, and the filming crew had just come around to the beautiful pool area that was surrounded by flowering plants and an extensive bar. He was pouring drinks for everyone, when through the far bushes tore Jésus, Miko, and Joseph, screaming like they were on fire, dressed only in their underwear, soaking wet, and covered with mud and splotches of blood. They had been swimming in the water hole, when they discovered themselves to be covered with leaches, which they vigorously tore off with their clothes and then ran, not knowing what else to do, towards Jésus’s pool to get cleaned off. All three plunged into the water and were captured, much to Miguel’s chagrin, on camera, befouling the pool and looking quite insane. Later on that day, Jésus had to sit through a tirade where he was instructed never again to play with Miko and Joseph nor any other of the workers’ children. He had extremely embarrassed his father, this he realized, but he understood that the embarrassment came not from their manner of entrance, but in his association with “dirty, ignorant little rats.” He had never heard his father speak like this, but once he realized that his father harbored such thoughts in his heart, he began to see signs of it everywhere. After a year of neglecting his education altogether, he was given a private tutor so that he did not have to go to the local school, and this persisted until middle school when he finally went to a private school on Luzon.
After a while, Miguel and Maria’s interest in Jésus waned considerably. He no longer traveled with them, nor was he able to travel around the plantation as before. He spent an enormous amount of time studying, as his tutor, given the approval to use the strictest measures if they proved efficient, considered him bright but very behind in his education. It seemed of paramount concern that he excel in a field of science or math, and, though he was never made aware, it was soon reported to his parents that was he now far beyond his age cohort in the public schools. He still was taken to different functions and photo opportunities, but he began to hate these, and he was brought along less and less. Since birth, he had always been surrounded by other children, but now, isolated, he felt the pangs of loneliness. These feelings only increased when, at the age of 12, he was taken to live in Makati.

Makati is a “Little America” in an already Westernized country, complete with restaurant chains and shopping centers far too expensive for the average Filipino. It is a diamond of wealth set on a ring of rusted iron. Most striking in the contrast between the Makati and the surrounding slums is the lack of armed guards that in other sections of Manila are in front of nearly every business establishment that is even moderately successful. One gets the sense that the guards aren’t needed because no one would dare steal or otherwise assault this proof of the economic engine at work, promising that one day such opulence could be the inheritance of all. But for now, the extremes of wealth and poverty create an entropy in Manila that is rarely, and thankfully, achieved by few other cities. Here the sewage choking the San Juan River floats by impoverished bathers, armies of children beg in the streets
sent out by their parents or handlers to squeeze a merger living from tourists, vast squatter towns are constructed under highway ramps creating mazes of corrugated iron from which rattle symphonies of distant, hollow voices, like the chanting of monks entombed in their catacombs. The mausoleums in the Chinese cemetery, a testament to the success of a tight-knit minority, are finer than the domiciles of three-quarters of Manila’s inhabitants. Jesús’ new home was a fortress floating in a concrete sea. Gone were the lush hills, the stunning vistas, the children, whom he was forbidden to see but did anyway because there were no fences, boundaries, or guards to keep them apart. To get to this new house, you first had to pass through a gate which was the only entrance to the small, walled community, and one of two guards, Jose and his younger brother Jamie, who had been in the army’s special forces and now took turns at twelve hour shifts and knew all of the residents by heart. Then, there was another gate and a guard that stood watch on the Cervantes property. Finally, there were three large mastiffs, wild, savage dogs, completely neglected except by Jesús and the maid Sofia.

Sofia was a lovely twenty-year-old, a decade older than Jesús when he arrived at the house. She had been in the service of Maria’s family since she was a girl, as were her mother and father, who had both drowned on an overcrowded ferry while going to visit relatives on Samar. Sofia was fifteen when this happened, and she had been taken-in by Maria’s mother. In this arrangement she worked as a veritable slave, for a hard and bitter taskmaster who considered her as such. Mrs. Lucientes had come from a wealthy dynastic family that had given the country
generals and admirals; politicians and business magnates; patriots who have fought in different insurgencies against the Spanish, the Americans, and the Japanese. She was the last of a generation who had squandered much of the family wealth and had done nothing of importance to carry on the family legacy. When Miguel and Maria had married, both mother-in-law and her small entourage moved into Miguel’s palace in Manila. Sophia effectively ran the house in their absence, which satisfied Maria both because her mother suffered from dementia in her old age, becoming cruel and suspicious, and because as Maria’s own beauty waned she became jealous of Sophia’s rising charm.

Jésus arrived in Manila with only his father. He suspected that a tremendous rift had formed between his parents. For weeks they did not speak to one another and ate at different dinner times. Jésus always ate with his father, as his mother, absorbed in her own problems, now completely forgot about the boy. Miguel still played with the boy now, but only in the game of chess. He was often very drunk and far less jovial than he used to be. His mother obsessed about her fading looks and now became somewhat reclusive. She began employing plastic surgeons to come to the house for various procedures, which left both her and their bank account sorely bruised. When his father announced that they were moving and that Maria was going to stay at the plantation for the time being, it came as no surprise to Jésus. What did come as a surprise was the change in his father’s behavior. Miguel found himself greatly rejuvenated by the separation from his wife. He gave himself up once again to the debaucheries of his youth that had brought him so much scandal,
but now with some learned discretion and the vigor of having suppressed these inclinations for so long. He was again jovial when he was drunk, and he was drunk far less than before. He was satisfied with more refreshing pursuits and the occasional dabble in cocaine. Jésus saw a regular parade of women enter and leave the house but kept quiet in his father’s confidence. The old mother-in-law, who Maria had been counting on to keep Miguel in check, proved to be far more senile and impotent than her daughter realized. It was Jésus, not Miguel that Mrs. Lucientes kept an eye on.

His father, meanwhile, had become far richer than he had ever been during his movie career. In a relatively short amount of time, he was able to turn around many of his existing investments and to acquire several other companies. This was all possible because he had his colleagues’ confidence and even their respect. He moved in the highest circles and began campaigning for a seat in the legislature. He won this seat by a wide margin, and even though he no longer lived on Cebu, he was successful at getting multi-billion dollar contracts to develop the island’s resources and improve the infrastructure. As he grew in wealth and power, he once again began to pay some attention to the boy and to groom Jésus as his natural successor. They spent long nights where Miguel exposed to Jésus a raw, gritty side of the human character, the world of business and influence, and the meaning of real politic. Jésus, as in his new school, was an exceptional student, who quietly absorbed everything, even that which his various teachers did not intend.
Ever since he arrived in Makati, he and Sophia shared a special relationship. Sophia had been born in servitude. She was free to leave at any time, but she had no schooling, no other skills besides those domestic, and had known no other life. Her only friends were some of the girls in the market, and she had never had a romantic relationship at all. It seemed relatively clear that she would live and die just as she was now, if for nothing else than she could not think of how else she could make a living. However, that did not stop her imagination. She dreamed of finding a husband with whom she could have children of her own, someone who would find her before her back was ruined by washing floors, before hard work had sapped her youthful beauty, and her childbearing years had slipped away. When Jésus came into the house, she was immediately very fond of him and poured over him her motherly inclinations, spoiling the boy with special snacks and presents, worrying about his health and happiness as no one else had during his life. He had either been a burden or served a function, but now, for the first time, he was cherished by someone, and he felt it. He was a light in her life and she in his, someone to spend free time with, to care for and be cared for, to notice his moods and share his thoughts. Soon Sophia secretly let Jésus sleep in her room, pretending (despite his age) that he was indeed her son, cuddling him and stroking his hair, dreaming of the day she would have a family of her own. This went on for years; the two played together, ate meals together, went shopping in town or to the movies, or Jésus would read Sophia stories and eventually even taught her to read. This difference in education became only one crack in Sophia’s illusion. Jésus was fast becoming a
young adult, and though he enjoyed being doted on like a child, when he spooned Sophia at night his heart raced, and he thought he would die of the happiness and pain she caused him. As he neared his fifteenth birthday, it had become obvious to Sophia that his feelings for her were much different than hers were for him, but she nevertheless did her best to overlook this fact, so strong were her own feelings. He was still a child in her mind, but he was someone she could love, and she desperately needed to love someone. Then, one day, she told Jésus, with a great deal of misery, he could no longer sleep with her. It broke his heart, but he stoically agreed.

It seemed that everything in his life began to collapse at the same time. Sophia began to act somewhat distant and detached from him which in his pubescent mind was cruel torture. His mind became constantly distracted and his schoolwork suffered. At the same time, his father began to treat him abruptly, and once or twice Jésus even noticed a bit of contempt in his father’s eyes when he spoke to him. He began to lay heavy responsibilities on the boy, chastising him severely for the slightest mistake. He claimed that soon he would have to take over some of the family businesses where there could be no mistakes. As Jésus had always shown an aptitude for math, his father had engaged a private tutor to teach him applied business mathematics and statistics. On his fifteenth birthday, Miguel turned over to Jésus the books of one of his floundering mining companies, expecting the company to go bust within a few months of his son’s novice management. Yet Jésus quickly realized that most of the company’s financial troubles came from the extraordinary salaries, much of them hidden, that the board members, including his father, were
extracting which left little capital to update machinery. Also, two copper mines were being run far under production capacity at a time when copper prices were soaring. He had a feeling that many of the board members were also taking bribes from competitors for this and would benefit immensely if their company was bought out. When he brought these facts to his father’s attention, he received only a hard right to his jaw. It was the first time his father had ever hit him, but Jésus swore it would be the last. He was subsequently relieved of his accounting duties, and when the company was bought out by a competitor later that year, his father made a deposit of $25,000 in Jésus’ own personal account, letting him know that it was a small percentage of what he made from the deal.

“That’s how you run a business!” he announced without even a hint of irony in his voice.

Miguel’s change of feelings for his son had actually nothing to do with business. His body was aging rapidly, and, though he drank less frequently, he became belligerent when he did. His mind was as sharp as ever, but it was always scheming and plotting. All this led to a general irritability that supplanted the lighter side of his character. The other reason for the change was that he too had been developing feelings for Sophia and was frustrated by her wariness of her employer. Miguel had some warped idea that he actually owned, rather than hired Sophia. She, on the other hand, knew quite well of Mr. Cervantes’ desires and actively avoided any situations in which the two of them might be alone for an extended period of
time. He was furious when he found out that his son and Sophia slept together.

Miguel said nothing to Jésus, but he began to dislike the boy very much.

There was something else that bothered Miguel about his son: though Jésus was quiet, everyone loved him; the workers on the plantation, his tutors and teachers, the chauffeur and guards at the house, even the old mother-in-law was rather fond of the boy. And everyone loved Jésus much more than they did his father for reasons that were obvious. Jésus was charismatic and kind, he knew no distinction between himself and labor and never asked anyone to do what he could do himself. Through his careful listening and watching, he had a deep understanding of people which his father’s lectures had enhanced and somewhat tarnished. When Jésus turned sixteen, his father withdrew him from school and told him that he was going to college in America. Jésus was both elated and disturbed as this would mean leaving Sophia. He decided that he would ask her to come with him. His father would oppose this of course, but they could do it secretively, making it seem like Sophia ran away on her own. Or, they could simply run away together, leaving his family forever.

As the time approached, Jésus decided that he would sneak into Sophia’s room and propose that plan to her. One night, when the rest of the household was sleeping, and his father was out carousing and unlikely to come back, Jésus crept cat-like through the hallways to Sophia’s room, staying at the doorway for a moment with his heart racing, before slipping in. Sophia heard the click of the door and the sound of someone carefully walking in, but was she not expecting Jésus.

“Sophia, Sophia…are you awake?” He said.
“Jésus, what are you doing here? I told you that we couldn’t…”

“Enough of that! There’s no time for our foolish games any more, Sophia.”

He spoke with authority, in a voice that Sophia had not heard before. He was annoyed and hurt to be met by her protestations when he was to about propose absolute devotion to her. “I am going to America soon, for college. Come with me. I know how to get you a visa, I have some people I can lean on, people in power. I have money, and we shall never lack for that. I don’t need my father anymore, and you do not need to stay here any more. We can go wherever we want. I can do this for us.” His eyes gleamed as he spoke. He was physically trembling, but he did not doubt for a second what he said. “I love you, as you know, but you do not know how much I love you or how I can not live without you. I will not go to America without you. This I promise.”

Sophia sat silently listening, but soon her head began to shake, and tears came to her eyes. “But Jésus, you’re just a child…”

“I am not!” he whispered fiercely, and she could see, perhaps for the first time, that he was not a child at all. He was far more able in the world than she. But now, there was another much more difficult problem that Sophia could see. How could she bring this up to him, and she must if she were to give herself to him and rely upon him through their days.

“Ah, but Jésus, you would not want to be with someone like me,” she said weeping.
“Why? There is nothing, nothing you could do which I could not forgive you for; nothing that could cloud my love for you.”

“But you do not know—you are too young and too naïve. I tried to hold out, for so long…but then despair came over me, and I thought there would never be a way out…”

“What is it, Sophia? No, don’t answer. I don’t need to know, for I already forgive you. You will be my savior and I yours, for we can forgive each other, and we care for one another as no one has.”

Sophia broke down in sobs and buried her head in Jésus’s chest (he was now almost a foot taller than she). As she said nothing more, and Jésus believed, with a shiver of ecstasy, that the matter was settled. It was at that moment that the most unexpected and tragic event occurred. Miguel had come home just a few minutes before. He was very drunk but moved silently, having his own reasons for stealth. He had approached Sophia’s door just minutes after Jésus had slipped in and had been listening to some of the discussion that went on inside. When the talking stopped, he burst into the room.

“Are you going somewhere?” Miguel asked. “Not to America, not any more that is.”

“That’s fine with me,” Jésus replied. “We’re leaving tonight anyway.”

“Ah, you’re running off with her? That is far beneath you. Sure, she’s beautiful, but she’s only fit to be your concubine. As she was mine.” While he said this, the most evil, malicious expression had come across his face, until he was
positively glowing with self-satisfaction. Jésus, who still didn’t believe it, lunged at his father, but Miguel caught him by the throat and threw him to the ground.

Though Jésus was taller, he was wire-thin and stood no chance to a man who nearly doubled his weight.

“Isn’t that right, Sophia?” Miguel went on. “How much have I paid you so far? Ten, fifteen thousand. You certainly have your own piggy bank to run away with. So why escape with a mere child?”

Again Jésus stood and attacked his father. This time he was more successful, landing two successive punches, one that broke his father’s nose. His father, now enraged, laid into him mercilessly and with a few punches had knocked Jésus nearly unconscious. Miguel grabbed him by the hair and dragged him out of the room, down the stairs and out the front door. Jésus fought as best he could but was left on the front step, pounding on the door, screaming until the entire house had woken. Sophia was trying to get down the stairs when Miguel caught her, threw her over his shoulder and carried her back.

“No, you’re staying here tonight. I will give you you’re an entire year’s salary for just tonight.”

Jésus saw from the window Sophia go limp across Miguel’s shoulder. He broke the window and screamed to her. This set a spark in her again, and she began furiously fighting Miguel off. He threw her into the room, said something on the intercom, and then went in after her. Jésus was seized by a security guard who was following his paycheck but not his heart. In a few minutes, Sophia came running
out of the house, screaming with terror and covered with blood (though not her own). Jésus saw her running towards the main gate but was still being held by the security guard. He again fought like a wildcat but this time with the intent to escape. He did and went after Sophia. He could not find her in the complex, nor did José, when asked, report to have seen her pass the gate. Jésus went back and through the streets again screaming her name like a madman. Not finding her, he wandered the streets of the surrounding community for the entire night, until he lost hope and collapsed in a small park.

Sophia had actually passed the front gate, but Jose had been sleeping and was only wakened by the sound of her climbing over it. When Miguel had attacked her in her room, she had fought with an intensity that seemed impossible from her barely five-feet frame. She kicked him hard in the groin, and he fell on top of her, pinning her to the bed with a certain deadness of body, his weight alone was crushing and made breathing difficult. For a moment she was trapped. Then Sophia noticed his bleeding nose and drove an elbow into it, causing blood to gush and Miguel to roll over in pain. She got up and began to get away when she felt a hand close around her ankle. She stared back at Miguel’s bloodied face boiling with anger, and she swung her leg around to smash it, but she was blocked and pulled again to the floor. Then, all of the sudden the fire went out in Miguel, and as sanity crept back in, he began to realize the horror of the situation. He let go of Sophia and hid his head in his arm. Sophia ran out of the room and into the city.
She did not see Jésus when she passed, as she was crying and hysterical. She ran through the streets, barefoot and dressed only in a nightgown. There were few people out at that hour, but those who were offered no help, and some even found amusement in the strange sight. Their laughter filtered into Sophia’s nightmare and spurred her on until at last she approached the river. There were houses and shacks along almost every imaginable space of riverbank, but Sophia knew of a public marina near by. She went to it quickly and stood before the filthy water as though waiting to be baptized. After a moment, she plunged in and began frantically washing the dried blood off of her. In her jumbled, shaken mind she had ruined everything in her life: she had lost her home, she had betrayed Jésus by prostituting herself, and now she had been nearly raped and believed it was her fault. This was all wrong: Jésus would love her and despite his hurt forgive her, as would God, and she could have started a new life with him, but in her despair, dark thoughts consumed her mind completely.

When she had calmed down, she began to wade out of river. Just before she reached the bank, she cut her leg on a piece of metal that was submerged beneath the murky surface. It created an enormous gash, but she took no notice. Soaking wet and with no place to go, she simply wandered in a daze, no longer crying or feeling much of anything. As the night wore on, and the birds awoke to announce the dawn, Sophia finally collapsed next to a fruit market. About an hour later, an old Chinese man, who owned the store, came upon her and took her inside to his wife. There, her wounds were cleaned and dressed. She slept for the rest of the day, and when she
woke up again, she was delirious. She was given over to a Filipino who practiced traditional medicine for the poor at little or no cost. They said that there was nothing they could do, but to change the dressing on her leg and try to regulate her temperature. It was up to her, they said, whether she lived or died. This may or may not have been true for she had contracted septicemia, and strong antibiotics would have greatly increased her chances of living. As it was, she wasted away over the next two days and died on the third. Jésus, now living on the streets, had been tracking her down and arrived only a few minutes before her heart stopped, as if she had been holding out to see him. When he entered the room, her glazed eyes widened and followed him, though she was delirious and spoke only with great effort.

“I’m sorry, Jésus. Sorry for everything, I failed you,” she whispered.

“Oh, Sophia, you have nothing to be sorry for, and I have nothing to forgive. I am a million times worse than you, or I fear I shall be without you,” Jésus said, with rare tears flowing from his eyes.

“I would so like to go with you to America or to wherever, as long as I’m with you…”

“We still can. I will get you to a hospital, now, this moment. And you will live, and we will be together.”

“It’s too late. I’m going to die; I feel it. But you must promise to live as you would have lived with me, and one day happiness and love will come to you again.”

“I promise,” he said, his head dropping onto her chest.
It was not a promise that he would keep, for when he heard Sophia’s heart slow and then stop, he began a transformation that started a new chapter in his life.

His first order of business was with his father. Miguel had woken the next day with a badly broken nose, a horrible hangover, and a terrifying feeling about what he had done. It was rather characteristic of him to worry mostly about the possibility of scandal. At first he received death threats, which he knew to be from Jésus. These did not bother him, as he had received them before, due to his political position, and he now surrounded himself with a team of bodyguards. He did not believe that Jésus had the ability to get to him, but soon that changed as notes began appearing at vulnerable places.

Jésus had some limited access to his father’s house, due to his knowledge of alternative ways to circumvent the gate. However, upon sneaking in one day, he was caught by Jaime and believed that he would be arrested, or worse, turned over to his father. Much to his surprise, he found out that Jaime had a message for him from Mrs. Lucientes, and he was instructed to meet her at Bienvenutos’, an upscale restaurant, usually not patronized by anyone under fifty. Jésus had some trouble getting in at the restaurant because of his ragged clothes and lack of hygiene from living on the street, but when they confirmed that he was a guest of the distinguished Mrs. Lucientes, they allowed him to pass right in. He found the old matron sitting by herself quite calmly, without a hint of the dementia that had seemed especially strong so recently. A brief period of lucidity had entered Mrs. Lucientes. After years of
depression, which contributed to her mental decline, she now found herself blessed with compassion for both Jésus and Sophia. This compassion corresponded to the recovery of her mental faculties. The intellect and our emotions are so closely linked.

Giving a slight bow of his head in respect, Jésus sat down without a word, expecting her to do most of the talking.

“Thank you for meeting me. My condolences on the loss of Sophia, I heard about it yesterday, and it made a very profound impact on me. I was not very good to that girl. She was entrusted to me by God, and I did not provide for her as I should have.” Mrs. Lucientes paused for a moment, looking at Jésus with sober, sincere eyes.

“The truth is, I have done very little during my life. My daughter no longer wishes to see me, and I am locked up with a man who has turned into a monster. He will kill you, or have you killed, or, at the very least, sent to prison for a very long time, and that will not do for someone as talented as yourself to waste away like that. So no more death threats nor anything that can definitely be traced to you.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Jésus asked.

“Because perhaps I can help you. You were meant for great things, but that won’t happen if you’re dead or in prison. Your father is powerful now, and he will not allow a scandal, but that is where you can hurt him the most.” Again she paused and saw Jésus shift forward as if at last she said something to peak his attention.
“I’m sure you have an idea of the manner by which your father does business. He is involved in any number of shady prospects at any time. But by far the way he makes the most money and wields the most influence is in kickbacks and campaign contributions from the companies that have received all of the investment contracts that have been pouring into Cebu. I was born on Cebu also, and I do not wish to see its resources plundered while the majority of the population remains poor and destitute. This is exactly what your father and his cronies have in mind too. But they are as stupid as they are greedy, and your father is the worst, he doesn’t even bother to cover-up his corruption. So this is the proposal I am going to make…”

Here, she pulled out a folder from her bag, handed it to Jésus, and began to expound on her plan.

A week later, Miguel was being driven home on a hot afternoon, when they were caught in traffic, and the air conditioner broke. They were less than a mile from his house, but he would not risk walking. He hadn’t received any more communications from Jésus, yet he was still very much on edge. For a half an hour, they sat without moving at all. Miguel rolled down the window a little for some air. A young child holding a baby in his arms came walking down the median begging from car to car. When he got to Miguel’s car, he stopped and stood there holding his palm outstretched. Miguel grew uncomfortable and finally rolled down the window and tossed the child a few coins, which he failed to catch. The child reached into the bundle holding the baby, causing Miguel to flinch, fearing that the child had a gun, but all that the child pulled out was a folded newspaper. He tossed this into Miguel’s
car, swooped up the coins on the ground, and walked on. Miguel was about to throw out the paper, when an insert fell out. He picked it up. It was a leaflet made to look like a newspaper article, but along the side was a listing from his bank account, the checks that had been deposited and the names of several of the companies and individuals that had contributed to it. His heart nearly stopped. He knew who this was from, but Jésus was clearly demonstrating that he had the power to make this go public if he so chose. Miguel knew that he had nothing to fear from this alone, but it was the suggestion of what type of information his adversary might have. He crumpled the leaflet, set it on fire and threw it out of his car.

That night he fretted and went through his papers, all of which seemed to be there and intact. Finally, he got drunk and fell asleep sitting in a chair at his desk. He woke the early the next day to the sound of birds singing loudly in the orange tree that grew outside. He opened the window that looked out upon the tree, letting the sunlight strain his tired eyes. Then he noticed a sheet of paper floating across the pathway. He might have thought it trash, but it looked too crisp. In a moment, he saw another one and then another, all being gently blown across his side yard. He sprang up and rushed to the front door. Opening it, he stood with his jaw dropped and his heart pounding. The front yard was covered with as many as one hundred leaflets of paper. He picked one up and read. It was another mock news story, this one relating the salaries he and other board members of the Cyclopes Corporation received, the mining giant with which Jésus had become acquainted. It particularly focused on the intentional mismanagement that led to bankruptcy and then being
bought out by a competitor, in return for extremely generous retirement packages for
the board. Once again, part of the paper was covered by an authentic document
revealing just how much Mr. Cervantes had benefited from this disaster.

When Miguel arrived at his office, Vig Desenudo, a wealthy, powerful man
whom Miguel disliked but did business with because he feared not to, was in his
office waving a piece of paper. He shoved it at Miguel.

“What the fuck is this? How does someone have this information?”

Miguel read a third bulletin that threatened yet another scandal, this one
involving Mr. Desenudo.

“I don’t know how this could have happened,” he lied. “But I will find out
and set everything straight.”

“You better before whoever’s printing this stuff gets it to the papers. What
do they want?”

“I don’t know.” At least this was the truth.

The following day he received a message from Jésus stating to meet him in
the Chinese cemetery. If he did not come alone, all information he had would be
turned over to the local media, as well as the BBC, which would ensure that the
scandal did not get buried. Miguel, seeing no other way, agreed. At the appointed
hour, he arrived at the cemetery and began searching for the designated mausoleum.
He asked a maintenance worker for directions. They were given, but the man acted
so suspiciously that Miguel deduced that he was in the service of Jésus. He followed
far behind Miguel but tried not to look obvious.
“Well, my boy is certainly learning the ropes,” he thought, with a strange feeling of pride.

He found the tomb and saw Daniel actually emerge from the inside. The two stared at each other, and Miguel became a little worried when he saw the unbounded hatred in Jésus eyes.

“Well, what is it that you want? I know that apologies are useless now,” Miguel said in a resolute voice.

“You will put one million dollars into an account I have set up in Singapore. If you have trouble raising the capital, I’m sure some of your business partners wouldn’t mind chipping in. But I’m quite sure you have enough. I’ve become quite familiar with your finances. In addition, to this payment you will donate to charities of my choosing another million over the next two years. I will return all documents to you after the money is put into my account. The charity money will ensure that you do not find me as your enemy again.”

“You’re fucking insane,” Miguel murmured.

“Maybe, but if you don’t do as I say, you’ll just be plain fucked,” Jésus smiled and began to walk away. “You have one week,” he yelled over his shoulder.

The following week Miguel came up with the money, and Jésus turned over the financial documents. Miguel told Jésus that if he double-crossed him, he would be as good as dead. Jésus just laughed. Soon after, Miguel was arrested one morning while he ate his breakfast and charged with tax evasion, stockholder fraud, and embezzlement. Several other associated businessmen and politicians were also
arrested. Jésus had gone straight to the prosecutor’s office with his information and was pleasantly surprised that the lawyer was a long-time enemy of Mr. Cervantes. Miguel did not spend much time in jail, but he was financially ruined by huge fines and politically ruined by the publicity.

Jésus, meanwhile, now had a price on his head and so, with his new found wealth, went underground. He left the country and went to Hong Kong to study economics and politics. There, he also discovered a talent for computer programming. When he graduated, he moved to the UAE and then Saudi Arabia, finding lucrative employment working for state oil companies. He converted to Islam, though he refused to endorse any particular creed or submit to any other religious authority. This in itself helped to make him an authority. He changed his name to Kaba and later, after he researched his birth mother’s name, which was Evelyn Luna, he took on that astronomical name as well. He spent much time making connections, growing in wealth, and studying, until he deemed it was time for his return to Cebu.
Chapter Ten

Daniel and Gavin had spent a few days in Manila, trying to contact Daniel’s brother. It seemed that the hospital that Daniel’s brother was supposed to be in no longer existed. It had been destroyed by government-fired missiles after it was claimed to be a stronghold of insurgents. The address that Kaba’s family supposedly lived at was a Senator’s residence with a different last name than the one Kaba had written. Daniel had tried to contact the residence, leaving messages without success. The news left them with an ominous feeling, and they wondered what to do next.

“We’ll go to Cebu. Try to find him through locals. Maybe there is a mistake,” Daniel said, but he felt instantly that this was not true.

Gavin was drunk most of the time, oscillating between an emotional exuberance and a brooding silence. Daniel drank moderately with him, as they were on vacation, but he was constantly preoccupied with the mystery of his brother and seemed to have little mind for partying. At night, after dinner, Gavin went out and roamed the city, while Daniel worked on an endless stream of leads. He would pay for some information, so it was always produced, but rarely was it accurate. At last, Daniel ordered plane tickets, and they caught a flight at dawn.

It was a sultry, misty morning when they arrived outside Cebu City, the type that one privately prays for the clouds to stay, for when the sun finally burns its way through in all of its tropical vengeance, it beats down all resistance, stops all movement, threatens all activity. Yet in the Philippines, being so poor, there was a great deal of activity now and would be throughout the day, except for an
abbreviated siesta, probably the greatest thing Spain had given its former colony in many years of harsh rule. America, another former ruler, also given to cruel oppression from time to time, had bestowed upon the Philippines thousands of army vehicles, redecorated in the most creative or bizarre fashions and preserved for generations. These vehicles served as private buses that got you almost anywhere you needed to go, and, in the larger cities, they were far more numerous and reliable than public transportation. Daniel was now in one that was festively called the Chook Truck, as it was painted to look like a giant chicken complete with synthetic feathers adorning the luggage rack and a front bumper that comically (and quite illegally) formed some sort of beak. When the truck went over big bumps, this bumper would scrap on the ground, producing a sound that could be imagined to be a chicken squawk, and Jimmy Toya, known to the locals as Smiling Jimmy, would lovingly reapply the yellow paint that had been scraped off.

Smiling Jimmy drove the route from Cebu City out to Mactan Island, a connected island off the coast with many resorts. Sometimes on slow days he would take his customers wherever they wanted to go, for he always liked a little variety, but he mostly stuck to this route. He made good money on this route and sometimes only had to do it maybe four or five times in a day before he could retire with a clear mind. He was able to put a little aside for his retirement, as he was now in his forties, and some for repairs, as the truck had now 500,000 miles on it with a completely rebuilt engine; he saw no reason why it could not go 500,000 more.
Jimmy loved his truck, he loved the freedom of his job, he loved driving around on hot evenings listening to the radio, talking with tourists or laughing with locals. He charged the two groups different fares, under the doctrine of “each according to his means,” but he was a fair man, a kind man, a man who never did anyone, foreign or local the least bit intentional harm. He talked loudly to Daniel, who was the only one riding at the time, and Daniel listened with obvious fascination. Jimmy had no family, he had been married once but was now divorced and had no children. He had worked for a long time as the cook for an Australian businessman who had a fine sense of humor and became good friends with Jimmy. The two spent many nights drinking and carousing about the town and passed five years together as rather content bachelors. The Aussie, having made a small fortune while working on Cebu, decided upon returning to his homeland that he would make Jimmy a parting gift of anything he wished. He offered to buy Jimmy a small house, a fishing boat, and many other expensive items, but he was surprised when Jimmy asked for the truck. It was in actuality a U.S. personnel carrier, left over from the Marcos years, but with a brand-new engine. Jimmy was wise; he foresaw many decades of still having to provide a living for himself, and this was the way he could ensure his freedom through self-employment.

The Chook Truck rolled slowly along the dirt roads passing basketball courts that were full despite the early hour and the heat, vendors of fruit that advertised their wares along the road side, and the fleet of motorcycle taxis supplementing the
buses. In Cebu that year, there were two players for each position of the court, two fruit vendors for every street corner, and two taxis for every passenger; it was worse, there were also two hundred applicants for each job, two thousand little hands begging on the streets of Cebu City, twenty thousand children being born on the Island that year, two hundred thousand people migrating to and from the Island in search of a better life. A financial crisis, a protracted civil war, a bomb going off last month in the center of Cebu City, all had added to the desperation of the people.

When stopped at street corners or when Jimmy saw someone he wished to talk to, men would spot Daniel’s American attire by some unknown power of perception for it differed so little from the locals, and would approach the truck with offers of female companionship—my friend, my aunt, my sister—the offers were both depressing and shocking. Still, the make-shift bus moved on past the disappointed hawkers, past the crowds of unemployed spectators who cheered these amateur basketball games with emphatic passion, past the crowded street small huts, all one story and made of whitewashed adobe that threatened to wash away with the next typhoon.

The truck hit the paved road connecting Mactan with a bridge and then running through a suburb that showed an entirely different side of Filipino life. Here there were plenty of restaurants with new signs, children with bright faces walking to school in their uniforms, and shoppers going to the malls that advertised foreign named stores selling at scandalously inflated prices goods which were often made right there in the Philippines. The truck stopped in front of a shopping mall, probably
the nicest in all of Cebu, and Jimmy turned around with a giant grin, obviously proud of himself for having divined the wishes of his passenger.

“I don’t want to go to a shopping mall!” said Daniel. “I said take me to someplace fun and happening.”

“There’s not much happening at 9 in the morning, my friend. This is where all the tourists want to go during the day. There is a Margarita bar that serves the best drinks right inside the papaya!”

“Ah, come on, Jimmy,” Daniel said in a friendly entreaty voice, for he had learned the driver’s name along with his history, “…I mean I want to go to where all the locals go to hangout and have fun. I told you, I was born here, though I don’t remember it, but I want something authentic to see what life would have been like if I had lived here.”

“But you said you had a brother who lives here—he can show you that. Where is he?”

“I would like to know that as well. It seems the hospital he was supposedly sick in does not exist.

“I have a route to drive and, as much as I like you, my friend, I can not be your personal tour bus.”

Jimmy’s voice began to sound regretful. He had experienced the quick anger and poor tipping of disappointed tourists before, and he began to worry that this trip would be unprofitable. Daniel, as if comprehending this, shoved the fare together with a large tip, into Jimmy’s hand.
“My brother is in Manila, getting an operation for an illness, he will return tomorrow, and then we will meet. Here is the fare, now please just take me to some place a little less like America.”

Jimmy did just that. He drove straight into a slum district which seemed so poor and desolate that Daniel found himself hoping the truck did not stop to let him out. But Jimmy, quickly surmising the good nature and generosity of his passenger, had decided to give him a good turn. He took Daniel back towards Mactan, but before crossing over, he turned on to a street called Independence Ave. It was named by a handmade sign, rather than a metal government issued one, and Daniel could see a pile of burnt signs, similar to the one now posted and telling of a battle that ran through the street. It was from this district that many members of Cebu’s independence movement had come and now, being as it was illegal to support, even verbally, any sort of insurrection, the street celebrated different aspects of the Philippines’ independence movement. On one building that Jimmy pointed out was a large mural depicting a battle between native islanders and what looked to be Spanish conquistadors. There was a man, finely dressed and pierced with many spears that Jimmy related to be Ferdinand Magellan who had died in this battle on Mactan Island. A fountain he pointed out was called the Fountain of the Katipunan, and a plaque beneath celebrated the revolutionary leaders Rizal, Aguinaldo, and Bonafacio, men held here as heroes yet denounced as traitors and terrorists. Ah, how different, Jimmy mentioned, these men were, though, from the cowards who set off the bomb last month. Daniel, having now been reminded of the bombing several
times, grew quiet and stopped asking questions. Then there was a curio shop that sold memorabilia from the Spanish, American, and Japanese occupations. This shop never made a profit and rarely had any customers for it appeared to be celebrating the “wrong side” but as such provided a convenient front for several outlawed, though non-violent groups. In the back of this shop gathered men accused of preaching hate and supporting the rebels by supplying fresh recruits; in the front was a beautiful young woman, perhaps only twenty years of age, with a fierce expression and eyes that examined in great detail the customers who might come into buy a Japanese “metals of honor,” an American pistol, a Spanish pike.

“That is a good shop, interesting for both locals and tourists. Perhaps you should start there?” Jimmy suggested.

Daniel, sensing Jimmy was growing tired of being his tour guide, agreed to be left off at this shop. He thanked Jimmy and handed him a ten dollar American bill. Jimmy’s eyes lit up because American currency had risen sharply in purchasing power, and, being more resistant to inflation, it was save-able.

Getting out, Daniel said, “How about taking my friend and I out later, if you have nothing special to do? We’ll pay for all the drinks and food.”

Daniel was not rich, of course, but here he felt it and having never felt so before, was in a mood of exceptional generosity. Also, he liked Jimmy and would feel much more secure with this man as a guide. Jimmy assented and told Daniel that he would pick him at his hotel at six o’clock. With that said, he drove off in search of fares and his regular route.
Daniel had no particular reason for choosing that shop to go into; perhaps it was because he was something of a history buff and comprehended the shop’s contents as neither good nor bad but simply interesting. Or perhaps it was because this shop seemed older than the surrounding stores, it was made of brick and was held together by and ancient mortar. Along the side there was a fenced in area that held many chickens and one severely battered rooster, and behind the building, he could just make out what looked to be the coop. He entered the store but did not see the young woman, who was sitting at the counter but obscured by a stand with many different flags wrapped around poles. The woman saw him, however, for she had positioned a mirror along the side wall so that she might enjoy this advantage. She had looked up lazily from her book upon the opening of the door, but when she saw Daniel’s face she did a double-take and studied him with eyes widening. Daniel looked around absently, picked some things up and put them back. He did not find as much of interest in the shop as outside it. There was one case that held some scrolls and yellowed papers, and as they were the only things protected in the store, they drew his curiosity the strongest. He was bending over trying to read one of the articles, when he jumped at a voice.

“Are you interested in them?” a woman’s voice asked.

Daniel turned and now could see clearly the woman who had been watching him silently for nearly five minutes. “Yes, I am,” he stated simply and then, as this didn’t seem to have any effect, added, “What are they? Some of them look old.”
As the woman approached, Daniel studied her features openly, as she had studied his in private. She was fair skinned for a Filipina, but whereas in Daniel, Western genes modified this quality, in this woman, it was Oriental genes that lightened her skin. Her eyes looked Japanese as did the delicate features of her nose and lips, and together Occidental and Oriental currents produced, as they did in Daniel, a remarkable face. When she spoke, however, her accent was unmistakably Filipino, and it had a sign-song quality that was quite out of place with her serious demeanor.

“This one,” she said pointing to a scroll, “… is a speech Aguinaldo, a revolutionary hero, gave when he toured Cebu after claiming independence. He is the father of the Republic, though he was captured by Americans shortly after. This one is Japanese, I don’t know what it is, but it carries the Japanese Emperor’s signature. This is order given by Taft, one of your Presidents and a colonial governor to the Philippines, to execute rebels without further trial.”

“How did you get these? They must be worth a fortune,” Daniel asked.

The woman looked insulted as if the authenticity of these documents were being challenged. “My father spent a fortune, his family’s fortune, collecting these things and now, as part of that ruined legacy, I am forced to sell them off. He left his children destitute, so that he could gather junk! He sold us for memories of Filipino oppression!”

If this was a lie, Daniel did not know, but it seemed so strongly felt, and it was such a poor sales pitch in a country desperate for commerce that Daniel was
about to believe in the authenticity of the documents. Then he looked at the prices they were set for. The scroll by Aguinaldo, surely a national treasure if real, was selling for the equivalent of one hundred U.S. dollars; the Taft order, for only ten. Realizing the ruse, but not wishing to be rude, he turned his attention to a white cloth belt, intricately designed and selling for an unbelievable ten thousand U.S. dollars, with no Filipino equivalent in pesos. He suspected that this was one of the few authentic items in the shop.

“And what is this?” he asked.

“It is a “Belt of A Thousand Stitches” given to a Japanese kamikaze pilot. Each stitch was collected by a pilot’s family, each stitch was a life the pilot was protecting and honoring with his death. They wore this belt on their last missions and with this belt on them and the responsibility of all of those stitches, the pilot could not fail to complete his mission.”

“Well, this one must have fallen off, or the pilot did fail,” Daniel said.

“What do you mean? You don’t believe it’s real,” cried the woman, again growing annoyed at the article being questioned.

“I mean, if he had succeeded, it’s very unlikely his belt would have survived. I’m sure it’s real, but he was one of the lucky ones.”

The woman was apparently shocked by this logic, and Daniel was shocked that it never had occurred to her before, that the owner of this belt had not gone on a kamikaze mission. Flustered, she replied, “Do you know what the word kamikaze means?”
“No, I don’t.”

“That’s not surprising, most people do not. Kamikaze means ‘divine wind.’

A divine wind, prayed for by all the people, once saved the Japanese from the
Mongols. The Japanese kamikaze pilots believed they were the return of this wind.
It always amazed me that these soldiers would think that as they invaded and raped
our island, that the gods would again protect them…But I admire their courage!” she
added.

“You would admire someone who would die in a brutal sacrifice for an unjust
cause?”

The woman stated simply, “Yes, if their courage is real!”

“Ohhhh…kay,” said Daniel, not wanting to push the matter. He thought the
woman acted excessively strange.

“Americans argue a lot, don’t they?” the woman asked suddenly.

“Yes, I suppose they do, but I can’t say that they argue more than other
cultures. I think all people argue a lot.”

“Well, let us not argue, OK?” quite suddenly, the sing-song voice reemerged,
now with the slightest tone of flirtation.

“OK. I didn’t mean…”

“Would you like to see my belt,” she interrupted.


The girl disappeared in the back and then came out holding a beautifully
embroidered, white cloth belt. It had many stitches, but not nearly a thousand.
“I am collecting my stitches, maybe you can be one,” she said, again with a coquettish note. She pulled up her shirt, as if to try on the belt, but with the more likely intention of showing her very curvaceous body.

“Not if one thousand stitches sends you off to death,” Daniel replied laughing.

He sensed the girl’s flirtation and was attracted to her, but he experienced what most people feel when they meet someone who rapidly transforms in substance before their eyes—either one of the two personalities must be false, or they both are true, and the person is unstable.

“Ah, I’ll be an old woman before I collect a thousand, so even if I reach the divine number, I shall blow away on a very peaceful wind.”

“That’s very poetic,” Daniel said.

“Thank you.”

“What is your name by the way?”

“Sophia.”

“That’s Italian, not Spanish, isn’t it?”

“So what if it is? What’s your name?”

“Daniel.”

“Well, that’s American, isn’t it?”

“I thought you noted that I was American.”

“But you’re Filipino too, that’s easy enough to tell. Your presence is American, your heart is Filipino.”
In saying this, the woman put her hand over Daniel’s heart. He enjoyed the touch, but something did not click. It may have been a lack of confidence, but Daniel sensed this flirtation was not necessarily driven by some overwhelming attraction. However, as her hand slid down caution began to fade. This was interrupted, fortunately Daniel felt, by the entrance of a German man. He was tall, startlingly white, and smelled of alcohol. He stood for a moment staring at Sophia, as if trying to recall her face. Then he spoke in English, in a loud voice, but with a refined accent.

“Do you have anything German?”

“You mean Nazi?” Sophia asked sharply.

“No, no, of course, not at all,” the man replied with alarm. “Just anything German at all.”

“No, I’m sorry we don’t. In this store, if we did, it would be Nazi. We do have these lovely handbags for your wife. They are made right here in the Philippines.”

“No, thank you, my wife, she hates handbags.” And he went out again, as suddenly as he had entered.

“Now, where were we?” she asked moving close to Daniel.

But Daniel had once again seen the abrupt change of personality in Sophia and so was again put on guard. Had she known the man she just spoken so oddly to? He sought to extricate himself from the scene.

“I have to be leaving. My friend is waiting for me.”
“Why don’t you bring your friend here?”

“Well, I might, but he’s not much of a history buff. It was nice meeting you, Sophia.”

“It was nice meeting you too, Daniel. Come back before you leave, I insist, or come to the Drome, it’s a bar on Mactan. That is where you are staying, right?”

“You work there too?”

She assented she did. He was about to leave when, he turned suddenly and asked, “How did you know I was staying on Mactan?”

“That’s where all the foreigners stay. There hasn’t been any violence there since Magellan. It’s only place on Cebu that’s like that.”

Daniel smiled at this answer and went out. Sophia went into the backroom from where she had retrieved the belt. A man, perhaps fifteen years her senior, was sitting back there in the darkness. He watched her come in and carefully put the belt away in a little trunk. To do this, she needed to pass close by, and in most meager light, the contrast of their skins made her seem a ghost and he a shadow. She bumped her head upon a low shelf and groaned. Why did he choose to sit in such darkness, she wondered. Sophia did not look at the man, but she watched him out of the corner of her eye.

“Did you see him?” she asked, finally turning to the man.

“I saw, I heard.”

“It must be him, he looks exactly like you.”

“Similar, but not a twin. America had diseased his soul.”
“Ah, that is always how it is with you—everything diseased and rotting! He seemed fine.”

“And how will he seem if he comes to the Drome tonight?” the man asked smiling.

“Vulnerable,” she answered, sharing his smile.

Later that day, Daniel found Gavin sitting beside the ocean, drinking out of a Mango and playing chess on a giant chessboard with two teenagers, brother and sister, who carried pieces nearly as big as they were. Gavin was playing against the girl, the older of the two, and was losing badly, but he had managed to get the boy to move his pieces for him. The boy had agreed believing that he was on the winning side, for he never won against his sister by himself, and at first his gamble seemed to be paying off, so that he was able to get off a solid thirty minutes of taunting his sister. Now, however, when Gavin was a move or two from being checkmated, the boy turned mutinous, and Gavin seemed not only far from being concerned, he seemed to be enjoying the sister’s triumph and chance to taunt her brother back.

“You lost on purpose! I know you did! I could have beaten her.”

“Let’s see you,” Gavin replied laughing, calling the boy’s bluff. “Besides, I would never lose on purpose. I am a rotten sport, and I cheat when I can, right Daniel?”

“That is absolutely correct.”
“But this girl has beaten me fair and square, and I shall always remember how brilliantly Katie destroyed my fortifications.”

The girl gave a dramatic bow, glowing at the compliment. She couldn’t convince her brother to play her, and it was just as well for in another moment their mother called from somewhere behind some palms, and they ran off. Daniel sat down on the sand next to Gavin’s chair. A waiter came by, and Gavin ordered two more drinks.

“You got to try one of these things, you can eat the cup when it’s done.” He peeled a section and bit a piece off, as though to demonstrate. “You know, these drinks only cost four dollars? Back home they’d be ten, and I bet you can find them for two dollars in the city.”

“Speaking of that, do you want to go out tonight?”

In reply, Gavin gave a look that said anything other than going out tonight would have been a ridiculous idea.

“Good. I got us a tour guide, this guy I met, I think he’ll be able to take us to some places that aren’t just tourist traps.”

“Great. That reminds me, dinner, which comes with the room, is on in a half hour.”

Daniel showered after Gavin, having accumulated a fine layer of dirt and sweat throughout his wandering. Gavin had got a head start drinking that afternoon in the hot sun, but now showered and refreshed, he was peppering Daniel with questions about Cebu City. Daniel told him about Jimmy and about Sophia, her
shop, and the other places he had visited. He complained that walking the three
miles back to their hotel, he had been offered a prostitute no less than seven times,
and casually, by pedestrians, as if they were selling watches of newspaper. Gavin’s
only lament was that he hoped that there were still girls on Cebu that weren’t
prostitutes, otherwise it would be a dull night. Daniel found this remark to be
insensitive and said so. This launched Gavin into a small lecture.

“You got to lighten up, man, you can’t be a moral crusader for everyone,” he
said.

“Well, would you sell your sister into prostitution?” Daniel responded.

“Of course not, nor would I pay for sex, but that doesn’t mean that if
someone offers you their sister, it is really their sister. Nor does it mean that the
woman is necessarily forced into prostitution. There’s plenty of hookers in America,
and if they wanted to, they could scrape a living some other way. I mean, shit, I’ve
had some pretty nasty jobs that I might have traded in for getting laid. I’ve often
thought I’d make a wonderful gigolo. You know, pleasin’ some fat cat old biddies
and all.”

This brought a laugh from Daniel, but Gavin drew him right back in with his
next statement. “Some might enjoy it, they might like being a prostitute, did you
ever think of that?”

“And some might be hooked on heroin and hooking to make a living, placing
themselves in dangerous situations so that they can continue a depressing cycle,”
Daniel said this rather loudly and plaintively. He had gotten out of the shower and
now was dressing, while Gavin sat in the other room drinking a rum and coke he had made from the refrigerator bar. The loudness of Daniel’s reply made Gavin take it as a challenge.

“So now you’re going to take on the suffering of people who are choosing to take drugs, choosing to have sex for a living, and being forced into neither. I drink, I take drugs and debauch, but I’m responsible for it, not you. Look, I feel bad for anyone who is forced either directly or economically to do something they don’t wish to. Some of that might go on here. In that case, you simply avoid contributing to that situation. What is it that you propose to do that is different, other than carrying around a lot of worry and condemnation for people who might not want it?”

“So you’re saying don’t care about other people?” Daniel answered defensively.

“I’m not saying that. Care, that’s great, but make sure the people you are caring for want your sympathy. Also, if you do care, it seems a little weak not to do something about it. So I say, if you care, do something about it.”

“Sure, that’s great advice, but surely we can’t act on everything we care about. So just because I can’t solve world hunger, should I not care and worry about it?”

“Hmmm,” Gavin said. He saw Daniel had a point. “Well, I don’t know. That is the conundrum of the modern world, isn’t it? Too much information, too many pleas for sympathy and help, and not enough ability to change things. Maybe
the secret is to start small. Maybe you should go save a prostitute from ruin tonight?” he suggested with a smile.

“Maybe, I will,” Daniel agreed amiably. Both of them would later look back on this conversation with the utmost irony, but for now they left it where it was and headed out to dinner.

They ate a quick dinner, both choosing the fish that was advertised as being caught that day. True enough, it was delicious, and after Gavin excitedly (and a little drunkenly) proclaimed it to be the best fish he had ever eaten, the message was carried to the chef who came out to meet them. He was a young man who spoke a most refined, educated English, and later that night they would see him out and hear him cursing with the most vulgar expressions imaginable. They would also see the bartender and one of the waitresses out. They discovered that while Cebu City had grown to nearly a million people, the group of people with an expendable income was quite small, and the same faces popped up again and again. Likewise, most of the people out seemed to know one another through some connection, and so the bar scene became much like a moving fraternity party.

Jimmy picked them up at the gate at six. He was driving someone else’s car though, his friend Ramon, whom he had brought along for the adventure. Then before the first bar, they stopped and picked up another friend, Ty, who happened to be Jimmy’s second cousin. The first place they went to was on Mactan. The outside of the building was painted a baby blue which contrasted starkly from most of the other buildings on the island. It was also different in that there was no sign or
anything to advertise the establishment. They soon found out why. The bar was a brothel. Women came out and danced in swimsuits and then would wait in a group on the side to be “ordered” by the patrons. Both Daniel and Gavin protested to Jimmy that this was not what they wanted—they wanted to go dancing and meet girls who were not hooking. But Jimmy could not seem to believe it. There was a German, he told them, who had been vacationing for a month and had come everyday until he had “ordered” every girl twice. Daniel was reminded about of the German that afternoon and wondered if it was the same. It took a half an hour and two rounds of beer to convince the party to leave and by then Gavin began to see what Daniel was talking about with the pervasiveness of the sex trade there. For instance, the other guys in the group, still strangers, kept trying to convince Daniel and Gavin to choose a girl, though how they could benefit themselves was a mystery. The next bar they went to was almost completely absent of girls or anyone for that matter, and so this was not much better. However, here, the guys were trying to get Daniel and Gavin to buy all sorts of useless souvenirs. Daniel suggested that perhaps these Filipinos felt it incumbent upon themselves to help out any merchants. At this, Gavin not so slyly made a reference to finding some marijuana, but he got the most unexpected response. Each of the men looked as if he had asked for nuclear material and stated firmly that drug users were punished most severely there.

“Okay, I see what you’re saying, Danny, these guys would be willing to sell their own mother, but think someone smoking a joint should be decapitated. This is a little weird. I guess it’s just a different culture,” Gavin whispered.
“Is that what it is?” Daniel asked. He had been drinking rather quickly, Gavin noticed, and perhaps had even caught up in drinks, despite the sizable head start. Moreover, there was something rather morose that broke out in Daniel from time to time, dampening his more jocular mood. It was what made Gavin decide to come with Daniel in the first place, but with all of the excitement of the last few weeks, he had completely forgotten it. He noticed that while they had come to Cebu to find Daniel’s brother, Daniel made no mention of it now and did not ask any of the members of the growing crowd that followed them from bar to bar.

The next bar was a little better and the next still better. With each place their entourage, bloated by the prospect of free drinks, grew and grew. Finally they came to a place that was more of what they had in mind. It differed from the others in having a dance floor and patrons to dance on it. The structure was completely wood and reminded Daniel of a Western bar in the U.S. There was a D.J., who played rave music from Europe, some colored lights and a crystal ball, but whoever was running them seemed not to grasp that they should be run at the same time. Thus, Gavin found it exceedingly amusing that the crystal ball served only to reflect the dim white lights that naturally lighted the place. It was here that one of the Filipinos took offense and said that Gavin was insensitive to Filipino culture. Gavin could not recollect having even met this person and, furthermore, being a rather experienced traveler, he was very sensitive to other’s cultures. He told the man so and demanded to know how the inability to work a disco ball represented Filipino culture. But this only further enraged the man. It was quite clear, that he was only trying to pick a
fight for some unknown reason, and Jimmy interceded. This incident, however, left a bad taste in everyone’s mouth, and Daniel and Gavin both redoubled their drinking. They danced for a while, came back, talked some more, and at one point they got up to use the bathroom at the same time. There seemed to be some unspoken sign for them to do this.

When they got in bathroom, Daniel said, “Do you feel that weird tension out there? I’m not talking about that asshole who tried to start with you, but everyone except for Jimmy and those first couple guys. Even them, though, they were insulted when we wouldn’t get prostitutes, insulted that we didn’t buy souvenirs, hell, they get insulted whenever we don’t act like stereotypical Americans, and then they claim we are stereotyping them!”

“I hear you. I don’t know what it is, but you’re right about the tension. I tell you, I’ve been to a lot of countries where America wasn’t the most popular, but the tension here is something totally different. Hell, Manila was different than here.”

“Did you hear that guy, the one standing in the bar with the baseball cap, say something like ‘fucking American pricks?’ I thought that the Philippines were supposed to be our allies?”

“Maybe that’s the problem. You know, there was a civil war on parts of this island and Mindanao until a few years ago?”

“Whatever it is, I think we should ditch the crowd.”

“Ah, but we can’t end the night, this is the first fun place we’ve been to,” Gavin insisted.
“Okay, I know a place called the Drome, it’s where that girl in the museum shop said she worked.”

“Do you know how to get there?”

“I’ll ask Jimmy; he’ll be able to keep it quiet.”

And so, the plan made, they proceeded to extricate themselves from the larger group, twelve or so strong by now, and they got directions from Jimmy how to get to the Drome. He declined to go, stating he was getting too old, but in reality he had also felt the animosity that some of his companions had for the Americans and wanted nothing to do with it. He was not, however, able to keep it a secret where the Americans were going, he mentioned it casually to his cousin when asked, and from there it spread to every member of the group, without Jimmy’s knowledge. Nor did he know that word of the American’s arrival preceded them to the Drome, and if he had, perhaps he would have prevented them from going.

The Drome was a lively place, frequented largely by businessmen and their clients, and, correspondingly, was nicely decorated with an expensive menu. It was, in fact, another brothel, but of another sort frequently found in East and South-East Asia. Here, prostitutes worked as “bar-girls” or conversation companions; they spent time and drank with their clients, brought them back to their private quarters, charged several times what their competitors did, usually received it, and paid a proportion of this to the bar’s owner. The name was short for the “Pleasure Drome”
It took Daniel and Gavin sometime to realize this, both being rather intoxicated by now and looking around at couples, about whom they expected nothing special. They would have suspected, after they ordered drinks and two rather beautiful women sat down, that something was amiss, but one of the women was Sophia. Daniel naively thought that she was just paying a friendly visit and introduced Gavin who was already visually drooling over Sophia’s friend. They drank for a while, and Sophia continued her bizarre fluctuation between flirtation and random spikes of anger towards foreigners with whom she was sitting and now conversing. The whole matter perplexed Daniel, but he saw that Gavin was obliviously unconcerned, and so he followed suit. After their second drink, however, Sophia suggested that they retire to more private quarters, and Gavin readily agreed. Again, Daniel made no protest, though by now he was sure of the situation he was in. In his drunkenness and loneliness, Daniel longed to be in Sophia’s arms.

The two men were led to a hallway running behind the building and split up, each going to a room that contained only a desk, a small mattress, and a table with a lamp. Unbeknownst to Daniel, Gavin ordered a bottle of rum and began playing cards and drinking with his companion. Rather than being upset at this man trying to monopolize her time, the girl began drinking greedily and generally enjoying herself with Gavin who made only the friendliest pretensions. As Gavin said, he would never pay for sex, but this was based more upon a feeling that he would never need to, and though he was now drinking and carousing with a prostitute, he still maintained the confidence that he could, if he wanted, stumble out of the brothel and
find himself a girl who was interested in him simply for who he was. Daniel, however, did not have Gavin’s indomitable ego, and he was, in fact, quiet lonely.

His last relationship ended months ago, and since then his life seemed to consist of insomnia, regret, and suffering. Daniel sat at the end of the bed as Sophia sat next to him, running her fingers through his hair. She was expecting him to make a move, but instead Daniel was paralyzed with the thoughts of Rose, whose feelings for him held him into making this world better not worse.

“Sophia, I can’t. It’s not you, I mean it is you—I mean, I have this feeling that you could be my sister.”

Sophia’s eyes grew wide with amazement at this last statement. Daniel got up quickly, stuffed some money into Sophia’s hand, and hurriedly tried to leave the room. He was shocked when he found a man standing outside the door, holding a tray with drinks on it. The man forced his way into the room, pushing Daniel back inside. The man shot a glance at Sophia and then abruptly left closing the door behind him. Wondering what was happening, Daniel looked puzzled, so Sophia rushed with reassurance.

“They were expecting you to stay longer so they brought us drinks.”

“I can’t drink any more, I should leave.”

“One drink, and I’ll sing you something in the meantime, a Filipino lullabye.”

Daniel agreed though he drank rather quickly, wanting very much to find Gavin and leave. He sat down on a chair halfway through Sophia’s song. He never
heard the end of it though, as a sudden and uncontrollable fatigue came over him, he’d just been drugged he knew, but then thought no more.

When Daniel woke, he found himself in a dark room sitting on a chair to which he was bound. Surprisingly, the binds came loose with little struggle, as if they were really meant to keep him from falling out of the chair, and Daniel freed his hands. His vision was still blurry, but a wave of panic brought back his consciousness, his heart slammed in his chest, and he felt as though he was going to vomit. He could hear the breathing of someone behind him, and before he was able to turn, a man leaned in close and whispered,

“I would have killed you in your sleep, if someone hadn’t intervened. But then again, maybe I wouldn’t, that would not be a proper turn to a brother, even one that abandoned me so long ago.”

Daniel spun around to see a man who was his mirror image, except that he was thinner, giving the impression that he was also taller. The shock made Daniel move back almost tripping over the chair.

“So what is this? You write me a bunch of lies just so that you can kidnap and rob me. And then you’re going to kill me for no good reason?” Daniel cried indignantly.

“I want nothing from you except your passport and other items of identification. And I was going to kill you so that you couldn’t follow me or alert your FBI, but also because I am not fond of Americans. I was in an American prison
that they ran secretly with the help of Philippine. There were prisoners there from all over the Middle East. But our government sent rebels who were trying to break away and form a socialist republic. If America hadn’t intervened, we would have been successful. I was fighting with the rebels and was captured. Despite our noble goals, the government, at America’s prodding, labeled us terrorists. There were also Americans who ‘advised’ our government on how to interrogate subject. As some of those tactics were used on me, I saw an American watching with cold eyes and just the slightest smile. It was then that I realized that it was America that was really the enemy and needed to be defeated first before we would be free to shape our own society. There is momentum building against the United States, and I plan to be part of it.”

Daniel turned fiercely and retorted, “You will accomplish nothing through violence. Give me a historical example of when violence, particularly violence that is directed at a civilian population, has provided a political solution, that is, a lasting peace or one in which a subjugated group gained the justice they sought.”

“What about your American Revolution?” Kaba asked.

“How did that work out for the American Indians, or the slaves, or poor whites, or even rich women, who remained domestic slaves of their elite husbands? No, if America has since changed for the better, it is because people’s consciences have change. And this is most effectively done through nonviolent means.”

“Is there never a time to result to violence? Did your Civil War not lead to the freeing of the slaves?”
"I agree that there are times to fight the evil of nations or institutions, and perhaps the Civil War was such an example. But it also led to the resentment of Southern whites and the oppression of African Americans for the next century. What I mean is that military victory is shallow if it is not followed by changes in people’s mind about living together justly."

Kaba was still not deterred. "The Haitian Revolution freed slaves and established the first Republic of freed slaves."

"And Haiti is now the poorest, most devastated country in the Western Hemisphere. The point is that violence always leads to a reaction, either a deepening of the hatred and resistance one group has for another, or the replacement of one group of elite with another. Only education and the changing people's mind's peacefully have ever been effective."

"Peaceful resistance without the threat of violence does not change people's minds."

"On the contrary, people only change through the willingness of commission never coercion. The wars that we fight today are wars of failed education systems—wars against madrasses that teach God's will is to murder innocent people, wars spurned by American education systems that convince even very educated people that the state has a right to hold a monopoly on violence, to use it as it sees fit to back exploitative economic policies and to turn this violence against their own people if they oppose this state-sponsored violence. The guns of Kent State in Ohio have been heard for nearly half a century now and have deafened people's ears to the abuses of
their government."

Kaba did not understand this last line, but he understood the argument, and it was defeating, fighting against someone who was already, at least theoretically, on your side. He wanted to hate Daniel. He wanted to abuse him of all the stereotypes he had built up in his mind against America. He did not want to hear of a fractured culture that strove against itself; that elements of American society were profoundly upset with the actions of the government, with those that spoke in favor of government abuses and sought to shout down all opposition. In the media, in the narrowing of policies between two parties, in the image that America broadcast to the world, one resounding voice had been growing louder, "Hegemony or death."

Rhetoric disguised this for the American populace, but the rest of the world had long since stopped listening to the rhetoric and simply watched the actions of the U.S. military and the various economic institutions that held much of the developing world in a sharecropper's status. Kaba wanted to speak, to abuse his brother for whom he had built up so much hatred, but he was deflated by an argument, and deflated he left the room in silence. A man came in shortly after with some food—weak soup and bread. He also gave Daniel a copy of the Koran, translated into English. Daniel picked it up and began reading. Amused, the man shook his head and left the room. Daniel was alone for the next dozen or so hours.

When Kaba had left, Gavin was brought into the same room as Daniel. He looked tired and somewhat ill but nevertheless unharmed. Neither spoke while the guard stayed in the room, but as soon as he left, the two moved together and began
whispering to one another.

"I think we bit the bullet on that one," Gavin said.

"I'll say. They were going to kill us. Just like that, my brother told me," Daniel replied.

"By the way, that's a fine brother you have—what is he, some sort of terrorist?"

"I guess. That's what he sounded like. He's got some serious anger towards America, and I can guess why he wanted to kidnap me."

"Why?" Gavin asked rather obtusely.

"To get into the country. He just wanted my passport. I don't think he even cared if he met me or even saw me, although I think he was curious as to what I was like."

"Did you make a good impression?"

"I got in an argument with him."

"It's always good to get in an argument with murderous siblings."

"Did you get a look at him?" Daniel asked.

"He's the spitting image of you. He'll have no trouble getting into the U.S."

"He's going to do something terrible."

"How do you know?"

"My dreams, those trances I've been going into—this is what that was all about. I knew this was coming, I mean I felt it."

"As a prophet, I think you should hone your skills a little more and see if you can't be a little clearer with your predictions—you know, before we get kidnapped
and all. I wonder how long they're going to keep us here, that is, if they really don't plan on killing us."

Daniel didn't reply for a moment. Then all of the sudden, he said. "He's coming."

Sure enough, Kaba opened the door. "You two will be spared, I promised Fatima. But you will have to stay here for the next few weeks. You will be well taken care of, I give you my word." Then he turned to talk exclusively to Daniel, "You are not at all as I would have thought. I am glad. I feel that I can almost call you brother, and I wish we had not been separated, then maybe things would have been different."

Daniel answered with trembling feeling, "I wish the same. Don't do it—what ever you plan to do. I can feel it, and I beg you there is another way."

"How much progress have you made with your other way? .....It doesn't matter, I have already committed myself to my fate. Good-bye now, I don't expect to see you again soon." And with that he made a slight bow, ignoring Gavin completely and keeping his eyes fixed on his brother the entire time. He left, and neither Daniel nor Gavin spoke for a long time.

It had been two days since Kaba left. The boredom was unbearable, as was the food, but they were alive, and there was still the lingering relief that they had escaped something truly terrible. Gavin had given up his usual inane talk, and it seemed interesting to Daniel that as he grew stronger, his friend grew weaker, at
least emotionally. Daniel's mind was consumed with how to get out of their prison, while Gavin seemed resigned to any fate that would befall him. It was something that Daniel had not realized about his friend, that Gavin had been going from defeat to defeat (at least as he saw it) for so long that he only bolstered himself through helping other. That is, his decision to look after Daniel was altruistic at heart but also served to help Gavin not focus on his latest defeat in Korea. Gavin's excessive drinking, his wild behavior, were not the joyous debauchery Daniel remembered of his friend when they were young. Instead, they were a blanket hiding the feelings of defeat, hiding the belief that at one time he had been special (or others had thought him so), and he had lost that specialness. Only through altruism was Gavin able to maintain a crumbling self-image. He was helping his own emotional needs by helping others, but after a lifetime of self-absorption, he was not very practiced in the art. Here, stuck in this dungeon, Daniel rose to take over Gavin's place.

"We're getting out of here tonight" Daniel said.

"How's that?" Gavin mumbled.

"Fatima, she's coming to see me tonight. I will convince her to help us escape."

"How will you do that?"

"By using her own beliefs."

Fatima did arrive that evening. The men guarding Daniel and Gavin refused to allow a woman to be left alone with Daniel. It finally struck Daniel that Fatima was not a prostitute and that he would never have slept with her even if he had tried. She was simply a lure, and there was some amount of disgust from being used as a pawn
in these wars games. These men were foreigners, much taller and heavier set than
the Filipinos. They wore thick beards and spoke only in a Middle Easter dialect,
perhaps Arabic or Pashtun, Daniel guessed. Fatima spoke to them in this language,
and Daniel took a chance that they did not speak English. Daniel took Fatima aside
and spoke in a hushed tone. He seemed to be reciting some pre-rehearsed speech as
his words spilled so quickly and without faltering in the slightest. After about a half
hour, Fatima nodded and left whispering only the words, "Allahu Akbar." Daniel
repeated the words and bowed his head as Fatima left.

Daniel squatted down to talk to Gavin, "We leave tonight. Fatima will take us."

"What did you say to her?"

"Lines from the Koran about mercy and forgiveness: 'Obey God and the Apostle;
happily so you will find mercy. And vie with one another, hastening to forgiveness
from your lord, and to a garden whose breadth is as heavens and earth, prepared for
the righteous...'. And I said God blesses those who: 'Restrain their anger and
Forgive the offences of their fellow men.' At the heart of every religion is peace,
and it is only through man's twisting of holy words is he able to breath out hatred and
intolerance."

Gavin gazed at his friend with a new look of respect and almost awe, "You are
becoming a prophet....I'm glad you didn't spend your time sulking in here with me."

Around midnight (time did not really matter as the room had no
Fatima came. She was alone, and it was surprising that none of the guards were present.

"I drugged them with their tea. I'm quite good at that, you know." Daniel and Gavin accented that she was indeed. Fatima continued, "I am going with you to Manila. These men will kill me when they find out I helped you escape. They listen only to Kaba, and now he is gone, and I have no family here."

Daniel suddenly realized something, "Are you the same woman that lived with my brother and Raga in the Chinese cemetery?"

Fatima nodded she was.

"My brother said you had been killed."

"Your brother lies a lot for a Muslim."

"What will you do in Manila?"

"I don't know. I'm tired of fighting, tired of hiding, tired of this world. It is a great trial that Allah puts us through before we can enter paradise. Here are your things."

Gavin looked in his money belt; amazingly, his money and travelers checks were still there. "They didn't take any of our money!"

"Kaba is not a thief. He wanted you to know that. He took Daniel's things only so he could get into your country."

"And what is he going to do there?" Daniel asked.

Fatima shrugged, "I don't know. He never told me. Something horrible though, I believe. He told me about your conversation..." she said nodding to Daniel, "He was bitter and mocked it, but I don't think he meant it. His thoughts were beginning to
change, I could tell, and what you said made sense to me.

"I was an orphan like you. My parents were killed by car thieves when I was only two. It is strange. They killed my parents but took the time to drop me off at an orphanage. I could see them as cold-blooded killers, but maybe it was a moment of regret that saved my life. I realize man is not only at war with each other, but with themselves as well. Every act of violence I have helped in during my life, even while I believed I was doing so to fight against evil, has only brought more suffering into my heart, and measured through suffering, my heart is now centuries old. I want no more of this, no more killing, no more hatred. You will not kill Kaba?" she asked and pleaded at the same time.

"We will not."

"Then how will you stop him?"

"I don't know, but we will find another way."

Fatima nodded, but her eyes said she did not believe. She was tired, and Daniel felt something dreadful for her. They took a large speed boat to Manila that was completely empty except for suspiciously hidden cargo. They did not speak to the pilot nor to Fatima who was awake but looked out mesmerized by the waves. Daniel had a strong feeling that she wished to jump overboard. Gavin was now much revived from his previous apathetic stupor. He had been sober for nearly a week now, and it produced a noticeable effect. He was planning and scheming, realizing that Daniel would be oblivious as to how they would get back into the country and the further difficulties they would face once they were there. The trip took all night
and part of the following morning. When they disembarked, Daniel took Fatima aside.

"Do not do anything to yourself. I know what is in your heart, and Allah does not want it. Either Kaba or I will come back for you, I promise. Check from time to time at this hotel." Daniel gave her one of the cards he had taken from the hotel when they first arrived in Makati. Fatima smiled and then, quite unexpectedly gave Daniel a kiss on the cheek.

"Kaba has always been a brother to me. That means you are too. You are so alike, the two of you, both filled with compassion and righteous indignation, you two are at war with yourselves. Compassion has won you over, and indignation has won over Kaba. Win him back to compassion. Perhaps, if you succeed, the war will be over, and I will see you again."

Fatima departed, and Daniel asked Gavin what he thought they should do.

"Go down to the docks. We're going to smuggle ourselves back into the country. Look, if we go to an embassy, they will never believe us until Kaba actually goes and blows something up, killing a lot of people, and then we will be charged as accomplices. No, if there is one agency you can trust to make the wrong decision, it's the CIA. We've got to do this ourselves. Once we get back into the U.S., Big John will help us because if there are two Daniels running around, and you were already under suspicion before you left, then it won't be long until you're back in prison."

"But then won't Kaba face the same risks?"
"He will, but he has a head start, he will enter the country legitimately, and then I think he will disappear. He's been waiting his whole life for this, planning it all out. He must have contacts and safe houses in the States."

"Where is he going? How will we find him?"

"He's going to San Fran. He took your ticket, didn't he? But he left mine. That means he's going to use it, and if we don't find him in San Fran, then Big John will help us track him down."

"You have a lot of faith in your drummer."

"A drummer?" Gavin laughed. "Oh, he's much more than that."
Chapter Eleven

Big John walked out of his small apartment onto the street that was filled with rubbish slowly being pushed around by the wind. He looked from side to side, and then again, before dropping his gaze to the filthy pavement. He shook his head disgustedly. It was his belief that this street was purposely left un-cleaned, in fact, abandoned by the city services, to give the appearance of neglect, when it was actually studiously watched by the police, FBI, DEA, and who knew—even the CIA.

As he walked down the street, he felt compelled to look into the passing cars, walk in an arch around an alleyway, and continually glance behind him.

As a teenager, he had once been arrested for shoplifting because he had walked into a store at the same time as some fellow students who actually stole something. It was claimed that he was a “distracter, an accomplice to the crime.” Unfortunately, he had been arrested prior to that for possession of marijuana, so he spent the rest of high school in juvenile detention. His father had been gone since he was two; his mother was a career alcoholic who got so bad at times that he to go live with an aunt and her exceptionally strict husband. His mother died when he was in juvie; he was released only to go to the funeral. Once out of school, he went to live with the same aunt who had since left her husband and was living happily now with a kind man, a musician. He taught Big John the drums, the base, and the keyboard. His aunt encouraged him to take the SAT and apply for college. He had never been successful in school, so he resisted at first but agreed to take the test. When he got his results, he had scored nearly perfectly on the whole test, with a perfect score on
the Math. It was an amazing break, for schools were now begging him to apply. Some offered scholarships and, as luck would have it, one was the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. He had grown up in Detroit, and, as much as he hated it, he swore to his aunt he wasn’t going to leave. Ann Arbor was a nice compromise.

He loved college and excelled in it. He studied Computers, Mathematics, and Electrical Engineering, gaining degrees in each, in only slightly more time than it takes a normal college student to get one degree. He would take twenty or more units each semester and still found time to play drums in several bands. It was in one of these bands that he met Gavin who was studying English and Philosophy there. The two played throughout college, but then their lives went in drastically different directions. Gavin got a job teaching English in Thailand, and Big John went on for a PhD. He kept up his feverish pace, working at the University’s computer lab, writing code for companies on the side, and all the while taking very heavy course loads. His past seemed behind him, and he pushed himself, in every way, to further himself from it.

He was weeks away from finishing his dissertation when he was stopped, out of the blue, by an undercover agent and searched. They found a bottle of amphetamines. It was his own, he was not selling it, but it carried a felony penalty and a short prison term. He never took the drug again, and he finished his degree in computer science, but for every job he applied for, he had to put down that he had a felony conviction for narcotic possession. Who was going to hire someone who admits to that? So, finally, in desperation, he simply forgot to put it down. He was
hired, stayed with a company long enough to be promoted before he was discovered as a former felon, and he found himself back in court (for it was a crime not to disclose this information). A second felony; a third might send him away for life. “So much,” he thought, “for freedom from excessive penalty.” He got a job in a computer repair shop. It paid depressingly low wages, and it used neither his education nor talents (for at a young age he had built his own computer), but at least his boss was much kinder than the corporate managers. The store went out of business, however, and he was soon desperate again.

“How is it,” he asked angrily to himself, “that the very people who fear that drug use will lead to criminal behavior and being economically unproductive are the very people who try their hardest to ensure this happens?” But he thought he already knew that answer.

Still, as he walked and felt humiliated by his paranoia, he could nevertheless not stop himself. He still looked around and once went into a coffee shop because he thought someone might have been following him. It was so different from his demeanor of when he was with others, such as Gavin and the band, that his friends would either not have recognized him or thought something was seriously wrong with him. Back on the street, he began again with the argument.

“How shameful it all is!” he began, but just then he started to pass some real police officers who had just turned the corner. The officers had obviously not been there for him, in fact they almost didn’t see him, yet he started so much upon seeing them that he drew their attention. His further reaction of assumed calm arose even
greater suspicion, and the officers turned to follow him. They walked like this for a while. Big John purposely slowed his walk so that they might be forced to overtake him, but they kept pace. He did not turn around now, though he could almost feel their breath on his neck. Finally, in a fit of anger, he stopped rapidly, seized a free newspaper from a box, and made as if he was reading it. The paper had on the front an unflattering story about the police and the riot of three weeks ago. The officers passed, and he matched their eyes, suspicion for suspicion, insolence for insolence, challenge for challenge. His eyes burned with hatred.

“Come on, search me, come on,” he thought.

They did not, however, but walked passed him somewhat irritated that he had done nothing to provoke a search. After they had turned another corner, Big John started out again, but along a different route.

Big John had further reason to be suspicious: he was engaged in criminal activity! True enough, the destiny that he felt had been laid out for him had been fulfilled, but he had seized it back; it was his destiny again! He was not dealing drugs nor did he steal nor was he violent in anyway. The women he knew found him to be the most gentle bear and lover. His crime was with computers; he was a “Rubber,” a funny term punning in two ways. One of his functions was to erase people, to help them disappear from all public and private record, and then to resurrect them with a new identity. The second function was to act as a prophylactic. He could temporarily shield people whose identity was too well known by the police or by creditors and who would be rediscovered no matter how many times they were
“resurrected.” His clients of both functions were not common drug dealers, violent religious fanatics or anarchists; he would have refused service to anyone of that sort. Instead, he helped people who might have been devastated by medical bills and bankruptcy, but still owed millions and thus were aggressively sought because they still had assets. These people paid the bills. Others were former felons like himself who had reformed their lives and thought—heaven forbid! —that they truly deserved a second chance. These were his cases of conscience. Sometimes he helped wealthy parents who wanted to buy a second life for their wayward children; other times he helped refugees and migrant workers slip away from the INS. And sometimes, very rarely (for he was most frightened of these cases), he would help someone fleeing our government for political reasons when he thought them innocent of any real crime. Always, always, he was destroying information, destroying thousands of digital fingerprints, destroying the webs that tie us so artificially, yet so strongly, to this world. He thought himself somewhat of a crusader in this role, and to many he was.

To others, he was of the most dangerous criminal type. Few Rubbers had the same compunctions that Big John did, although some practiced completely free and felt they were performing a dire public service. Some were destructive saboteurs blighting corporations and government with a vicious vengeance, others were truly in league with terrorists and organized crime, but amongst the general population of Rubber, this type of activity was looked upon with disgust. Most Rubbers, like Big John, felt that there was dignity and a code of honor in their profession, for they
imagined themselves soldiers fighting a just cause. It was a war by proxy, the battlefield was the world of information; the cause was to preserve human independence. Like the others, Big John did not own a computer himself, nor even a disc. He did own a small computer repair shop that never got much business and did not even have an Internet connection, but he could never be found possessing a computer of his own. He worked in safe houses whose owners could not be found, and they worked on computers that would be dismantled or destroyed immediately after—it was simply the price of doing business. His codes were scattered in a thousand places out in the ether, but they could be reformed with sophisticated algorithms and used in a moment’s notice. Law enforcement tried to locate and destroy these codes, but as has been the case since Gutenberg, information can be created much quicker than it can be destroyed. Because Rubbers had to be caught in the act and because they were so mobile with nearly the whole country being wireless, law enforcement became desperate to find or entrap them. As often happens in such situations, laws were amended and re-amended to give greater powers to catch perpetrators, and ethics sank lower and lower. For instance, it was a favorite trick to implant the Rubber’s computer with child pornography and then to rush in, seize the computer, and even if all other information was lost (as was often the case) they could still send the assumed violator to prison. As though this was not an exploitation of the poor children! The greatest evils are so often done for what someone believes is the greatest good.
Big John walked in and ate at a McDonalds for what seemed to be an unbelievably long time. After two large milkshakes, he checked the clock and then left calmly. He began to undergo a transformation, it was the same as when he walked on stage or even picked up a drumstick. He did not look around anymore, but stared straight ahead and walked with long determined steps. His path was still very windy, and sometimes he crossed and re-crossed streets at different intersections, but he walked with the utmost confidence and concentration. In about a half-hour, he was walking through a nice section of the Glen Park area when he went into a building that differed only from its neighbors in that it was dark, and there was no garbage can out in front on the sidewalk. Big John walked up the dark hallway, never once stumbling though he had never been there before and could not see a thing. He came to a door at the top of the stair and rang a buzzer. In a few moments, he heard a door open, and then the door in front of him was pulled open as well. There was a young man of ghastly white complexion as though he had never seen the light of day, standing in front of Big John with a broad, almost fawning, smile. He spoke, however, in a most serious tone, and he showed Big John in with the air of a confident host.

“You see, everything is in order,” he said.

“I see.”

The room was absolutely bare except for a desk with a rolling chair in front of it, a computer on the desk, a dim lamp, and an old sofa, upon which sat a middle-aged woman, presumable of some Middle Eastern descent, with a polite, but very
worried look on her face. She wore a black business suit and had a very intelligent face; her manner, however, was of a rather timid composure. She rose to greet him, but he bade her to remain sitting. The host, looked at the scene very evidently pleased, as if he had just produced a saint.

“So I hear your son is wanted under suspicion of terrorism? You must know, that as a rule, I refuse to do such cases.”

“Then why have you come?” The woman asked.

“Because my associate, here,” he said motioning to the ghost-man, “assures me that your son is innocent beyond a shadow of a doubt, and he has, in a sense, called in a favor with me. But I still have doubt.” Big John was not harsh when he said this, nor was he exhibiting his usual outwardly jovial character (which was indeed only one of his characters); he spoke very matter-of-factly, almost casually, like he was not talking to a bereaved mother.

“Oh, he is innocent, completely innocent. This is a witch hunt, a persecution. You see me…I am educated, I am Western,…so is my son! He is no radical, no religious fanatic, he’s liberal, most liberal…and I know, I know you will save him. I know this for a fact,” the woman said with her voice trembling as though holding back tears.

“Where is he now?” Big John asked.

“Ah, in some filthy boiler room. The last place he was hidden was raided, and he was almost caught, but he escaped without being sighted. How did they know he was there? We think they have heat sensors—so, the boiler room. For a
whole month, he has not been out. I want to get him out of the country, but how can we? They seem to know everything, they are everywhere!” At this the woman broke down in tears and uncontrollable shaking, as if it were she that was imprisoned in that boiler-room.

Big John turned to his associate, “You have the file on the man?”

“Here it is.”

“And you haven’t left anything out?”

“I would not do that to you.”

“I know you wouldn’t, I was just…never mind.” He took the file and began to read. After a long while he said to the woman, “Why did he come back to this country? He must have surely known that writing like this would be perceived as inflammatory?”

“How could he have known that he would be arrested for it though? Look at it. There is nothing in there about blowing up civilians or anyone for that matter, there is no crazy religious ideas, he only calls for the end of American economic and military domination of the world.”

“He suggested, not so subtly, that it would be nice if the U.S. government is toppled.”

“Isn’t that what you believe?”

“No, not really. It’s wrong, it should be changed, but he advocates a rather unrealistic chaos.”
“Nonsense! Is there anything that he says that was worse than what Marx wrote in Britain, in 1858? Was the world more free then, more just? It seems so. Look…I know, I am educated, I told you… and if there was any way that the law would be followed in this matter, that our Constitution—for we are Americans too—would be observed. But no, it will not be. If my son is caught, he will go to prison for the rest of his life. They will find something to put him there. He has already been condemned publicly.”

“Yes, I see that,” Big John said as he flipped through newspaper clippings. He read for a while more in silence and then suddenly announced: “Ok, I believe you, you are right in this.”

The woman began to thank him, but he stopped her. He was again all business, but he took a noticeably kinder attitude with the woman, seemingly recognizing her maternity at last.

“So we can do this, I can erase any digital pictures, his DNA file, anything that could ever be used to find him, but they will have hard copies of this stuff and can reload it. So first, I will replace all his files with a ‘ghost-man.’ This will be discovered soon enough, but it will give him a few weeks. He will still have to be disguised well enough to fool human eyes, but my associate can arrange that. Get him out in the next few days just to be safe. You might want to think of leaving yourself. That’s up to you. Now, I’ve got to get to work.”

He walked over to the desk and began typing.
Chapter 12

Big John was invaluable as Gavin had predicted. He essentially erased all records of Daniel from all governmental computers, while at the same time they were able to get a sense of where Kaba might be staying by looking at the pattern of Kaba’s use of Daniel's credit card before it was deleted from the system. Daniel, or Kaba, in his place had been being tracked by the Federal authorities and by Calvin Johnson, both in relationship to Dr. Keene and Boethius. Several more pointless suicides, young people seeming to annihilate themselves without motive, had taken place while Daniel and Gavin were in the Philippines. All had been members of Boethius' cult, and though he had drawn much attention, no charges could be brought against him. Daniel's role in the whole matter perplexed everyone, including Daniel himself. However, he decided to bring the matter to a head and through Luke scheduled a meeting with Boethius. Freya had meanwhile gone missing, and Rose was driven nearly insane with worry. The culmination of events hung palpably, like a storm over everyone's head.

Every day, he combed the streets without much hope. He felt sure that Kaba was still in the city, but why he hadn't carried out whatever his plans were perplexed Daniel. He felt, with only the slightest bit of hope that Kaba was actually having a crisis of conscience, that having reached his destination, he now wavered in his resolve to commit his act of terrorism. Daniel was close to the truth, for though Kaba had arrived and met his contacts, he delayed them from any action. Kaba felt that what Daniel had argued was true, that any act of violence against the Americans
would only provoke more wars, more suffering for his people and the other poor people of the world who would be suspected and used to divert attention from the increasing domestic problems, just as the jihadists used anger against America to motivate and control their populations as the quality of life suffered in part from their own actions. Particularly, it was Daniel's argument that coercion, especially in the form of violence, elicited a reaction of resistance, while solutions to conflicts could only truly be solved through commission, the changing of opponents' attitudes through sacrifice and the willingness to take a higher moral ground. But he was paralyzed between a lifetime of mounting anger and the desire for retribution and these new thoughts delivered by Daniel. Kaba saw the hand of providence in his own sparing of Daniel and in the change that was taking place in his soul. He had not been born a murderer, and when he thought of the deaths that he had helped in and of those he had planned in the future, he began to see the monstrous nature of his own actions.

As luck would have it, while Daniel and Gavin were heading down to the Embarcadero to head off Boethius, Daniel caught a glimpse of Kaba disappearing into a very dilapidated building. When one sees oneself on the street, it is very hard to mistake the person for someone else. So Daniel at once decided to follow Kaba into the building.

"Go on and meet Luke and Rose," Daniel said. He would not listen to any of Gavin's protests, and so Gavin let him go, his heart heavy with foreboding.
When Daniel entered the building, he found it empty except for random garbage strewn across the floor, some broken glass on the floor, and a dim light that stood on a small table but left most of the room in shadows. There were stairs leading up and disappearing around a corner. On the top floor, voices could be heard. Kaba’s was not one of them. He had been standing next to the door, and Daniel walked right past him into the room without noticing.

“So you made it to America surprisingly fast. But I knew that you would come after me,” Kaba said.

“How did you know that?” Daniel asked.

“I learned much about you from this,” Kaba said holding up Daniel’s diary. “It’s tough to see where reality ends and fiction begins in here, but your arguments, your character and concerns for the world were moving. It made me realize that I would have been proud to have you as a brother. So when I came here, I realized that I could not carry out my plan, especially when it could be against brothers and sisters. You are right, also, that the effects would be the opposite of what I would wish. There is already a battle for America’s soul, and terrorism only aids those who would use violence in return. I used to long for this battle, this open war, for I felt that America was already waging an undeclared war, and this might be true, but America can only be changed internally, just as any society. You mourn that you have done so little to help this world, but maybe your time is just beginning.”

Daniel’s eyes glistened with joy hearing his brother’s words. “Thank you, and you will help me. I know it, and we will accomplish much together, we…”
But Kaba was shaking his head. “No, I believe my time here is limited. Since I have refused to carry out my mission, my contact has betrayed me to some vigilante. This man has sworn my death. He knows of some of my crimes in the Philippines, Americans that I killed, and he will demand retribution.”

“But if you are no longer a danger, why would…?”

“For some, including myself at one time, justice is not about resolution but rather revenge.”

As if on cue, a man forced himself into the door, knocking Daniel from behind and nearly crushing Kaba behind the door before he kicked back. The door swung back, and though the man jumped to the side, the corner caught his head and opened a gash above his eye. The man was Calvin Johnson, and the calm man Daniel had met in the library, was now blind with rage. Daniel began to speak, but the man silenced him.

“Be quiet. Only one of you will walk out of here, and I will find out who.”

He turned to Daniel and asked, “Who sent me here, who was your contact here in America?”

In an instant, Daniel understood the answers to Calvin’s questions, “Boethius did. Right now he’s planning another attack.”

Calvin expected Daniel to be ignorant and Kaba to be the one who would answer this question. But Kaba knew Boethius under some other name and so would have answered differently. Calvin only needed one more question to be sure. “Why am I here for you?”
Again, before Kaba could speak, Daniel answered. He guessed the answer from something that Fatima had told him about Kaba, “You’re here because I ordered a bombing on Mindanao that was supposed to kill Americans. And for what I came here to America to do.”

“But you no longer plan to?” Calvin asked.

Daniel shook his head.

“That doesn’t really matter.”

And with that Calvin drew a gun and shot Daniel in the chest several times. Kaba grabbed a board that was lying on the ground and brought it down on Calvin’s head, knocking him unconscious. Daniel was already dead when Kaba reached him. He wept bitterly for his brother who had knowingly sacrificed himself for him, a murderer. Kaba looked over at Calvin, and for a moment he thought of picking up a glass shard and falling upon him. Instead, however, he followed his brother’s example of mercy and escaped through a window as the police, who had been called by the residents upstairs, came in through the front. Calvin was arrested and went to jail for Daniel’s death. Meanwhile, Kaba hurried down to the Embarcadero to where he knew Boethius would be.

A crowd of several thousand had gathered surrounding Boethius and his followers. He had not yet sent them off and had planned a special ceremony to bolster the resolve of his young minions. Rose had found Freya and the younger sister collapsed into Rose’s arms agreeing to go home. One by one, members of the crowd drew the cult members away, providing comfort and offers of help. Soon
Boethius was totally alone, enwrapped in the isolation he had so emphatically endorsed. He realized that both of his plots had failed, and his masters in the company would not allow this to go unpunished. He would have to disappear and go into hiding. Gavin and Luke found Kaba in the crowd, neither took the man to be Daniel as Calvin had. They knew their friend was gone, but they listened to Kaba’s explanation of what had occurred. Both instinctively believed him. They accepted Kaba as Daniel’s replacement, and indeed Kaba worked tirelessly to right the wrongs that Daniel saw and wrote about in his book. He became a teacher and volunteered for various youth groups. In time, he and Rose fell in love and married. Together, on Freya’s twentieth birthday, they all traveled back to the Philippines and adopted twins, one boy and one girl.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS

Moral reasoning is a difficult topic to explore scientifically. The problem arises because of the difference between hypothetical moral reasoning and moral reasoning that results in an action. However, Kohlberg constructed a model that was widely used based upon moral dilemmas. He also succeeded in constructing a universal theory of moral development that was tested across cultures, ages, and genders. The question from an educational point of view is: Could a curriculum of teaching moral reasoning be made from moral dilemmas and Socratic questioning?

I used Kohlberg’s dilemmas as discussion topics while working with incarcerated youth. What I found was that answers were given to dilemmas and rarely would the student re-think the dilemma when questioned in a Socratic fashion. This was actually what I had expected. Dilemmas used for psychological studying of moral reasoning would not necessarily matter to juveniles facing real life moral dilemmas. What might be perceived as student obstinacy could just as well be emotional overload inhibiting deep thought. The same could be seen in the students’ academic work. Despite many of their best efforts, I constantly found that students had extreme difficulty concentrating, especially at the approach of a court date. Often, if I was lucky enough to be team teaching, I would counsel students one-on-one before they could begin their work. It was not a matter of coercing a student. Rather, I felt it was emotionally stabilizing a student by showing that you cared
about them and their problems. Usually, this appeared to provide some emotional stability so that high order thinking was possible.

What I wish to point out is that Kohlberg’s dilemmas seem to back his theories when they were performed in a more clinical type setting, especially if the study was completed one student at a time. What is frustrating, is Kohlberg’s lack of taking into account the mood and emotional disposition of the students. In the methodologies of many of the studies I read, the mention of emotion was clearly absent. This, in my opinion, leads to the necessity of studies, using Kohlberg’s dilemmas and questioning methods in real classroom settings. These studies would have to range amongst different ages and socio-economic groups. In addition, I feel that some account of student emotions must be included in these studies. These conditions would give a much better idea of whether or not a moral reasoning curriculum could be developed from Kohlberg’s methods.

On the other hand, what I have witnessed in many different educational settings is that creative projects are often an important vehicle for students to voice their emotional well-being, their thoughts upon particular moral reasoning that was not hypothetical, but dealt with their real lives. This was abundantly clear when dealing with incarcerated youth. The poems, short-stories, drawings, and other creative projects these students created were often windows into their reasoning as to why they committed the crimes for which they were being tried. Also, these projects often revealed students’ need for serious psychological interaction (for example, suicide notes). Studies should be completed to see how effective creative projects
soliciting information on moral reasoning could be as a moral reasoning curriculum. In doing so, caution to protect students’ privacy must be taken. Of course, as a mandatory reporter, a suicide note should be reported to a psychologist or counselor, but this would be preferable to having a student who needs help and finds no outlet to ask for it. However, being that these students are an atypical group, similar studies should be done in a variety of different classroom settings. This would also give us insight into how productive a curriculum using creative projects specifically based upon moral reasoning development would be for understanding and teaching moral reasoning.

Due to the questions I had about Kohlberg’s studies and because of the problems that I felt would produce a more realistic arena for studying moral reasoning (e.g. putting subjects under emotional stress while assessing their moral reasoning), I turned to a creative project. There were obvious advantages and disadvantages to doing so. One disadvantage was that I was not dealing with real subjects. One the other hand, there are few characters in my book that do not have some basis in a real person. Isaiah’s experiences in war were taken from a Frontline television interview from a soldier that had driven on a bulldozer and watched thousands of Iraqis buried alive or gunned down while trying to escape. The soldier further talked about an emotional breakdown following the war and his subsequent conversion to being a born-again Christian. I personally gained more insight into this individual’s moral reasoning than in the dialogues between Kohlberg and his subjects. Kohlberg, in the Psychology of Moral Reasoning (1984), used several real
interviews to philosophically back his reasoning. One such interview was a television interview with the Captain responsible and court-martialed for his role in the My Lai massacre. Thus, most of my characters were originally derived from either my own experiences or the real-life experiences of others. However, their actions in the Book of Daniel came mostly from my own imagination and their actions were fictional even when given a real background. The point I am trying to make was that moral reasoning does not happen in a vacuum; people have different emotional and psychological backgrounds, different aptitudes for moral reasoning (which Kohlberg was sure to point out), different possibilities for future actions.

The Book of Daniel and the Literature Review that preceded it obviously differ greatly. The latter based upon studies that were scientifically carried out and, as the Literature Review pointed out, often methodologically flawed. The book itself contains the flaw of not having a scientific methodology. Instead, it focuses on raising philosophical questions, having the reader become emotional involved themselves with the characters, and making connections between the characters’ emotional pasts and present conditions, the moral reasoning they use in their actions, and their ability to change their both their moral reasoning and their future actions.

In conclusion, the study of moral reasoning is inherently flawed for ethical reasoning, but is valuable in the insights that can be gained when these flaws are kept in mind. Likewise, the study of moral reasoning through creative projects holds promise in the manner of qualitative observation and analysis. Both scientific studies and creative projects hold enormous promise in the studying of moral
reasoning. However, Kohlberg’s dilemma studies have been repeated almost to redundancy. Creative projects may hold more opportunities. Above all, the link between emotions and moral reasoning was established in this project’s Literature Review and should be taken into account in any future studies or curriculum development. The ultimate question of what type of moral reasoning curriculum, if any, should occur in public schools will continue to remain debated. However, with school psychologist, counselors, psychological testing, etc., there has already been established the link of a student’s emotional well-being and their academic performance.

REFERENCES


