

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

REVELATIONS: 6:8

BE:

The Rise

Jihad S. Uhuru

THE BEGINNING OF THE END

April 3, 2002
New York City

Arguably, the three most powerful men in the world were sitting at the “One World Order” Trilateral Commission roundtable a hundred feet below the historic Waldorf Astoria hotel in Manhattan.

If the dictionary were to describe what an average middle-aged, white male banker looked like, Bernard Schwartz’s picture would have saved Mr. Webster from wasting words. Bernie was definitely not what Hollywood would deem your leading man type. Standing flatfooted at five-seven, with a vampire complexion, he was may be one hundred sixty pounds. Bernie was far from being a physically imposing figure. But what his physical attributes lacked, his mental prowess more than made up for. Akin to beautiful people sleeping their way to the top, Bernie used his analytical prowess and sociopathic cunning to rise to his now Wizard of Oz-like status as Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank and head of the Trilateral Commission.

Bernie was a planner; everything, his successes, his failures, all had been planned down to the minutest detail. That's why it was odd to see him seemingly lost in thought as he stared straight ahead at the gray concrete underground walls while George Bush, the head of the CIA, argued his case.

"XR13 has had five assignments since nine eleven. Five. All executed flawlessly. Eight kills. In those months he has not done anything to suggest that he has ulterior motives,"

General Maurice Lesure's quick temper would have derailed his NSA appointment six months ago if he hadn't had a garbage dump full of dirt on one too many movers and shakers in government. The physical opposite of Bernie, the NSA chief was a former standout college hoops star. At six-five, he had the height but his width and muscular disposition made him the prototype professional NFL lineman. To this very day, Lesure still held the record for heaviest starting basketball player in Rutgers' history. Thirty-five years after leading Rutgers to its first NCAA championship, Lesure's three hundred pound Iron Man physique had jellied into three hundred sixty pounds of Michelin Man fat. Like his weight redistribution, his hair had done the same. As time went by, his hair slowly started to relocate from the top of his head to his ears, back and nose. Although his hair and weight had made a transition, his penetrating blue eyes and the force of his baritone voice still had the power to make the strongest man quiver.

"Are you frigging kidding me?" General Lesure hammered his melon-sized fist on the walnut oak roundtable before extending an arm toward the CIA director. "All you need is a friggin' mini, a halter, and some frigging Pom-Poms. For Christ's sake, Gerald, we found a thumb drive in his mother's home; a thumb drive that had an unauthorized conversation with you and him on it."

Gerald leaned forward, clasped his hands in front of him and stared into the riveting blue eyes of the NSA chief. The

stare-down lasted seven seconds before the director spoke in a calm tone.

“Your feeble attempt to belittle and emasculate me, your loud accusatory tone, nor does the tintinnabulation of your fist banging on the table, intimidate me in the least, so I would suggest that if you really must open your mouth and regurgitate the pre-school thoughts that are swirling around in that liver spotted bald head of yours, the least you can do is exercise some modicum of respect when speaking in my presence. I respect your opinion Maurice and your passion for what and how you believe,” he pointed a finger in the air, “but, remember, at the end of the day,” he pointed the finger at himself, “you answer to me.”

The general bounced out of his seat. “Who in Sam hell...”

Chairman Schwartz stood up and slammed his titanium briefcase onto the dark wood conference table. “Gentlemen.” His neutral position shifted to the NSA chief. “Sit down, Maurice.” Once the general was seated, Bernie sat down and turned his attention to the director. “Give us the facts, Gerald.”

“The facts are this... I personally ordered the investigation into XR13, not because I suspected him of foul play. I ordered investigations into any and everyone that was involved with our plans to take out the towers and the pentagon. It was an added security measure. Do I know why XR13 had a recording of he and I innocently speaking about nothing on a thumb drive, no, but what I do know is that if XR13 knew that we tortured and killed his mother he would come for us by any means necessary. Do I think he suspects us? Yes, I do, but he will not act out of suspicion. Do I think his mother was innocent? Yes I do, but in war there are always innocent casualties, and although we are not at war, we would potentially be in a civil war if America knew what we did on nine-eleven.

“We even put his mother through some of the most painful torture techniques... that is, until her heart gave out.

Her torture was a waste of the government's time and resources. She didn't give us anything because she didn't know nothing." The director turned to the NSA chief, "And before you ask, we did not interrogate XR13 because he would only tell us what he wanted us to know. No amount of torture or sodium pentothal would loosen his tongue."

"And how do you know this?" Bernie asked.

"Because I trained him."

"In the end, Frankenstein turned on his creator," the head of national security said.

"First, General Lesure, Frankenstein is a fictitious figment of its creators' imagination, Treble XR13 Frazier is a living, breathing problem."

"Bottom line, Gerald," The bookish-looking chairman of the Federal Reserve interjected, "What would be the potential fallout if XR13 were to go rogue?"

Gerald took a deep breath and exhaled. "As you know XR13 has been with us since '68. He was one of the recruits after we eliminated the agents that were involved with taking out King. We recruited XR13 right out of the military. Navy Seal. For the last thirty-four years, he's been the number one sharpshooter in the world, and one of only a handful of people that can build a nuclear bomb. In the over thirty years he's been with us, he's taken down 413 targ..."

"Gerald," the General banged a fist on the table, "Stop pussyfootin' around. Bernie asked you what the bottom line was."

"If you would shut up and let me finish, Maurice."

The NSA chief pointed a finger at the gray haired, Mitt Romney look alike. "You are finished, Gerald. You're the one who cultivated the relationship between the Bin Laden's, the Saudi government and XR13. I voted against the terror campaign. I warned you."

“I’m what? You warned me? General Maurice Jefferson Lesure, I am your superior, what you just said is akin to insubordination.”

“I don’t work for you.” The NSA chief’s face twisted into a mask reminiscent of someone swallowing spoiled milk. “I just answer to you. Like yourself, the department of defense pays my salary. You don’t have the authority to remove me.”

Gerald nodded. You’re right. I don’t, but I can make your job pure hell. Now if we wanna start pointing fingers,” the director pointed, “you wrote the AFOC bill. The American Foreign Oil Campaign is your baby Maurice.”

“I never agreed to take out the twin towers or the pentagon.”

“You didn’t have to. The dollar was and still is on the verge of collapsing. We have nothing to secure the national debt and we have nothing to back the American currency that’s in circulation. If China calls in our debt America is screwed. We had no choice.”

The NSA chief exploded. “There’s always a choice. At the end of the day, XR13 was your man. You don’t even know how much or what he has recorded over the years.”

Bernie stood up. “The only way to contain this is to eliminate XR13, his family and every agent he’s worked with over the last five years, which is about the time we began planning nine-eleven. Unfortunately, time is of the essence and we don’t have time to interrogate his family, just the agents he’s worked with.

“I agree, but before we go after his family or the agents we have to take out XR13 first,” the CIA director said.

“I detect a little trepidation in your voice, Gerald,” the General said. “Scared that the big bad Black 007 is going to come for you?”

“No, I’m scared that he’s coming for you, Maurice. You see if and when he comes for me, I’m sending him to your

doorstep. I'm sure he'd enjoy inserting his big black manhood into..."

"Don't say it." The chief pointed a finger at the director. "As God is my witness, Gerald..."

"Sit down and shut up Maurice so we can get this over with," the chairman said. "Gerald, please continue without the threats."

"My apologies sir." The director nodded. "XR13 knows that we know that he knows something."

"Friggin' idiot," the General mumbled.

Bernie made a stopping gesture with his left arm while shuffling some papers in front of him. "Gentlemen, placing blame gets us nowhere." He looked down at a paper in front of him. "XR13 has a ten-year-old son, Zion Uhuru Jones by off-and-on girlfriend, Malia Jones. Eliminate her and the boy. That will draw him out."

"He'll know we did it. Do we really want to risk XR13 going to the press?"

"With what?" Bernie asked. "Is he in possession of some damning evidence? Is there something you haven't told us, Gerald?"

"Of course there isn't. But, we-we don't know what hard copy Intel he has in his possession. He did have a level four security clearance."

"Level four?" Bernie sounded surprised.

"Bernie," Gerald explained, "XR13 is by far the best counterintelligence specialist we have ever trained. If we get close to his son, he'll know and he will be ready."

"We are talking about one man, Gerald. I don't care how good and well-trained he is, we are the American friggin' government." The general gave the CIA director a stern look. "So, do you know where the woman and the boy are or not?"

Gerald nodded, "I do."

In a calm quiet tone, the chairman said, "Gerald, make sure the woman and her bastard don't see another sunrise. I

don't care how you do it. And by the end of the week, I want XR13 and everyone associated with him dead or we will begin to question your loyalty."

"You can't threaten me. I'm the director of the CIA," Gerald said.

The chairman leaned back in his high back red chair and smiled while never breaking eye contact with the director. "I know who you are, where you live, what church you attend and what school your children go to." He clasped his hands behind his head. "I even know where your mistress gets her nails done every Tuesday." The chairman stood up from his red chair. "Who am I?" he shrugged. "A banker. Chairman of the Federal Reserve." He took a couple steps before putting his long slender fingers on the director's shoulders before leaning in and whispering. "But, let me tell you what I can do, Gerald. I can use the resources of the American government to do to you what needs to be done to protect this nation. And if that means arranging for you to fall on the pointy end of a bullet headfirst and replacing you with someone competent enough to do as I fucking ask, then I will not hesitate to act in whatever way I deem is in the interest of America."

Bernie rose up and directed his attention at the General.

"Uh-Uh, the recordings?" the general asked.

"Find them, Maurice, and any other evidence implicating the American government in any wrongdoing." Bernie dug his fingernails into Gerald's shoulders. "I do not have to tell you what will happen if XR13 divulges any physical evidence of the government's involvement with nine eleven.

MMOJA

April 3, 2002

Same day: Atlanta, Georgia

Like an Italian sports car, the black limo zipped in and out of Atlanta early afternoon traffic. No matter how tense the situation, Treble "XR13" Frazier was trained to stay calm. He learned long ago that panicking in any situation did not produce quicker results. As a matter of fact, it often hindered progress. That's why the CIA's version of the mythical James Bond, filed his nails while silently singing the Earth, Wind and Fire classic, "*Now, I'm craving your body, is this real?*"

Treble dropped the nail file before checking his Movado. 2:23pm. His flight departed at 3:15pm. He would have to do a Flash Gordon if he was going to make the flight. He reached down to his left and pulled his briefcase onto his lap. There he opened and removed two metal rods with four half dollar sized wheels attached. A few minutes later, the

Middle Eastern limo driver slammed on brakes in front of Delta's South Terminal.

Treble reached inside his powder blue double-breasted suit jacket and pulled out a money clip full of endless hundred dollar bills. "Shokran Akhee." Treble thanked the driver in his native Arabic language while peeling a hundred-dollar bill from his platinum money clip.

"Afwan Akhee," the driver replied.

Gate agents, passengers, shuttle bus drivers, taxi drivers, everyone outside of the Atlanta airport's South terminal was focused on the long and slender elegantly dressed black man rolling to the airport's sliding doors on what appeared to be supercharged motorized roller blades.

Treble Frazier could easily pass for an Olympic athlete. Built like a professional sprinter, Treble was in better shape than most professional athletes half his age. He had never eaten processed foods, pork, or red meat. For forty-five of his fifty-five years, he'd exercised his body and mind for hours daily.

The main difference in his training and the training regimen for professional athletes was the motivation. Although athletes are highly motivated to train for their sport, people like Treble are motivated in ways that athletes would never be. Athletes often regroup and train harder when they lose to the competition. The loser in Treble's profession didn't live to train another day. There can be no stronger motivation than competing for your own mortality. While racing toward his gate, Treble pulled out the cell phone he'd not long ago purchased and dialed the number of the man's home he just left, Reverend Dr. John Boyce.

"Hello?"

"Rev?"

"Finished installing the infra red barrier around my estate already, Treble?"

"No, I have to get home. I have a situation."

“Okay, give me a minute, I’m walking out of the convention hall now so I can hear you. London is so beautiful this time of year,” Dr. Boyce said. “Okay I’m outside.”

Treble began, “Seven months ago, right before nine-eleven, they searched Malia’s, Momma’s, and my apartment in DC, Frisco, and Chicago. Momma went missing around this time.”

“And why are you just now telling me this?”

“You didn’t need to know until now.”

“You didn’t think that Hattie Mae being abducted elicited a phone call?”

“I never said she was abducted.”

“If you can’t find your mother, then she’s been abducted. Can you feel her energy, Treble?”

“No.” Treble shook his head.

“She’s gone?” Dr. Boyce’s statement came out as a question.

“Yes.” Treble nodded. “That’s why I didn’t call. Before I knew she was missing, I felt her life-force leave my body. There was nothing you or any of the others could have done. By acting against my bosses, I’d only alert them that I knew that they were the enemy.”

“You sure it was the Agency?”

“If it wasn’t them, it was another faction. At the end of the day, they must all be destroyed.”

“Hattie Mae was a phenomenal woman,” the reverend said. “I am so sorry, Treble.”

“I am, too.” Treble nodded.

“Any Intel to corroborate your theory?” the reverend asked.

“While reviewing and analyzing footage from the hidden surveillance cameras at the apartment in Indianapolis, I saw Momma going through my pants pockets before preparing my clothes to go to the cleaners. She found a thumb drive. It

must have been defective because I deleted its contents, but for some reason the deletion didn't fully take."

"So, Hattie Mae accessed the content?"

Treble nodded. "On one of my laptops, by accident I'm sure."

"Okay, let me get this straight, almost seven months ago, less than two weeks before the towers went down, your mother found and accessed a thumb drive on one of your laptop computers in the high rise apartment downtown on Meridian. The contents on this thumb drive were partially deleted."

"That's right," Treble said.

"And how soon did Hattie Mae come up missing after she accessed the content?"

"Within two hours."

"And how can you be so sure of the timeline that she went missing?"

"I had and still have surveillance on my handler."

"You what?" Dr. Boyce exploded. "You have surveillance on the director of the CIA?"

"Yes, and others," Treble said. "As soon as Hattie Mae accessed the drive, I knew. Unfortunately, I had to act as if I didn't, so I wouldn't arouse suspicion."

"So, you have surveillance showing that Hattie Mae was picked up?"

"No, she was not on my property, or at her house. They probably grabbed her out in the open," Treble said.

"What exactly was on the jump drive?"

"Originally, it was a conversation between Director Bush and I."

"About what?"

"Jihad Umoja, author/activist. He was supposed to be my next target. Umoja's too-close-to-home content in his books and lectures scared THEM. THEY had too much vested in their *Muslim Smear, Fear Campaign*."

“So,” Dr. Boyce said, “Obviously there was something on it for the CIA to...”

“The only thing that was left on the thumb drive was the director thanking me for my service.”

“No! If you are correct, then they tortured your mother for information. God rest her soul. Hattie Mae didn’t deserve that.”

“I know, Rev.” Treble nodded. “I know. Since her disappearance, I stepped up my surveillance efforts on some and pulled back on others. I’m calling you now because all hell is going to break loose shortly. Less than an hour ago, I received Intel that the agency is going after Malia and Zion. I’m headed back to Indianapolis now. Rev, if anything happens to me, I need you –”

“First, nothing’s going to happen that you don’t want to happen and second you don’t have to ask me to do what I was born to do. You know I will raise him in the light.”

“Two thousand years,” Treble said. “We’ve been preparing, praying, and training for this. Unfortunately, I may not live to see the outcome, but you must make sure Zion finishes what we started.”

“Treble, before you were a twinkle in your daddy’s eye, your destiny had been mapped out, you just didn’t know what your role was until recently.”

“Yeah, you thought I was the Messiah. You and Baba even convinced me that I was *The Rise*. All those years living under the palace, training my body and mind to defeat the Pale Horse and its rider.”

“We never lied to you, Treble. We deceived you, for your own good, but we never lied. We always knew who you were.” The Reverend paused to allow his words to seek in. He continued. “Zion is an extension of you, son. He is not just your sun, but he is everyone’s sun, just like he was when he was re-born in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago. Zion’s success depends on you setting the stage like John the Baptist did. You

had to go through the burning sands, just like Zion will have to. Whether it be in body or spirit, you have to help prepare him, you have to protect him by any and all means. The Pale Horse rider is only getting stronger.”

“Old friend,” Treble said. “Do not worry. I will do my part as I have always done.”

“You and Zion are the last descendants of Shango. Shango’s soul and his blood runs through both of you, but it is Zion who was born to be *The Rise*,” Dr. Boyce said. “Treble, remember back in ’65 after Malcolm was assassinated, we vowed to make his dream a reality? Now that day is coming close.”

“Yes, it is. It will be a long, arduous process but tearing down the white patriarchal racist system and rebuilding it into a truly egalitarian system of government will be well worth the blood that we’ve spilled and the blood that we have yet to spill.”

“All rows for flight 724 to Indianapolis are boarding now,” the pleasant voice sounded over the airports intercom.

“Rev...”

“I heard... You be safe and don’t worry about my end. The church is ready. If you need anything...”

“I know. And Rev?”

“Yes.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too Treble. Now get home to your woman and son.”

“Shit!”

Treble disconnected and looked at his watch. 3:00. Zion got out of school at 3:05. Malia would be home waiting. He pressed one on his speed dial.

“Boarding pass?” an airport attendant asked as he made his way up to the gate.

His undivided attention was on the ringing cell phone he had to his ear.

“Sir, I need your boarding pass,” she requested again.

“Uno memento,” he said while holding up a finger. He reached inside his Hugo Boss suit jacket pocket and felt his other cell phone along with his boarding pass. That’s when he remembered that his ten-year-old wouldn’t answer a number that wasn’t programmed into his phone. He replaced the untraceable minute phone with his personal cell.

“Thank you and have a nice flight Mr. Rodriguez,” the attendant said using the name that was on Treble’s passport and boarding pass. Being light skinned with wavy straight long black hair, Treble could pass for a multitude of ethnicities.

He was taking a huge risk. The CIA could easily track him, but he had no alternative. Zion would not answer a call from an unknown number.

MBILI

April 3, 2002

Same day: Indianapolis, Indiana

Donnie Emerson was a polar bear, big, fat, hairy, and dumber than a doughnut. Typical elementary school bully on the fast track to a career of crime, incarceration, and death, not particularly in that order. Zion didn't know his true age, but what he did know was that the fat, stringy-brown-haired, zit faced kid was older than any kid in school and that it had taken him two years to go from the fifth grade to the sixth and now he was serving his second term as a sixth grader.

It was Friday. The Indianapolis Spring sun felt like summer. Zion's jacket was in his backpack with his books and cell phone. Before Zion got onto the school bus, he heard Donnie's loud, obnoxious voice. While Zion made his way toward the back of the bus, he glimpsed Donnie leaning over his seat about to flick a kid on the ear. Zion took his seat and thought that he had nothing against white people, but Donnie was just plain mean. Zion hated mean, and would have done

something about his bullying back in September when he started riding the school bus, but his dad had told him to exercise patience and to not bother anyone unless they bothered him repeatedly. And Zion had never disobeyed his dad or his mom.

Zion was three when he began studying eastern forms of self-defense. And he could think of several ways to inflict bodily harm on Donnie. Zion didn't want to hurt Donnie or anyone else but he didn't want Donnie or anyone else bullying others.

Donnie was always starting trouble, especially on the school bus. He'd never bothered Zion, probably because Zion stayed to himself and didn't socialize much with kids at school. At lunch and at recess Zion was always off somewhere to himself, his face usually engrossed between the pages of some book. Most kids thought he was weird.

While most ten-year-old boys played video games, watched cartoons, and did what most ten year olds did, Zion could usually be found reading a book. Science fiction, and Paranormal was his favorite but it wasn't unusual for his head to be engrossed between the pages of the Quran or Bible. While reading was his first love, target shooting and running was not far behind while writing was a close third.

Zion was sitting in his seat writing in his notebook while he thought of the competition tomorrow. He was the youngest and only kid from the Midwest to reach the finals. He didn't expect to place first in the five-mile obstacle course, but he did expect to win the self-defense and the shooting competition. His smile broadened at the thought of all the happy faces and full stomachs he would be responsible for after he won the competition. He wished he could feed all the homeless people in the world, but the five thousand dollars prize would only pay for so much barbequed chicken and fried fish.

Donnie reached over his seat and grabbed the notebook.

“Tomorrow is the big day. The biggest,” Donnie read aloud. “I can’t wait to see all the happy faces after I use the prize money to throw a barbeque for Atlanta’s homeless.”

Zion remained seated. In a cool measured but stern tone, he said, “Donnie give me my notebook.”

Donnie continued in a singsong girly tone. “I would be the youngest by five years to ever win the hunting skills challenge.”

“Now, that everyone knows that you can read, I’ll ask you one more time.”

“What you gon’ do if I don’t, punk?” Donnie spat. “Go on, tell Mr. Sams and make him pull the bus over. Show everyone how much of a little snitch you are. Don’t make me no never mind, punk. I’m gon’ tear a mudhole in your behind if you tell or not.”

Zion was more relieved than angry – relieved that Donnie was writing checks with his mouth that his behind couldn’t cash – relieved that he could smash the big-mouthed bully without disobeying his father.

Zion shook his head. “I’m not going to tell.”

Donnie slipped into the bench seat next to Zion. “Then, who’s gon’ make me give this,” Donnie held the notebook in the air, “back?”

Zion hit him with a chopping blow to the neck. Donnie dropped the notebook grabbed his neck and fell out of the seat into the aisle.

“Mr. Sams,” Zion shouted while bending over Donnie who was on his knees trying to breath.

Before the bus driver could make it to the back, Zion whispered in the bully’s ear, “Now show everyone how big of a snitch you are.”

Ten minutes later, Mr. Sams restored the bus to some semblance of order. Donnie remained seated next to Zion.

He pinched Donnie's arm.

"Ow," the fat kid squealed before turning to Zion.

"Nobody saw what I did to you, and we can keep it that way, do you understand?"

Donnie nodded his head up and down at the much smaller Zion.

Donnie seemed to be in a trance as he stared into Zion's eyes. "From this point forward," Zion said, "you will use your size to protect and defend others from harm. You will be a gladiator for good. You are a son of Creation and you will walk in the Light. You will stop hating yourself. You will love yourself unconditionally and you will love others more. This love will inspire and motivate you to train your body and your mind to benefit and uplift others."

Donnie's lip quivering nods were Zion's indication that his words were having little to no effect on the bully. He decided to get off the bus a couple stops early, before Donnie's lip quivering turned into crying and crying turned into finger pointing.

After exiting the school bus he reached into an outside flap of his red backpack for his cell phone. Seventeen missed calls. All of them from his dad. His first instinct was to panic. Instead, he took a few deep breaths and closed his eyes. He could feel his dad's energy. He could hear Treble's bumpety-bump heartbeat. He searched the clouds inside his mind for his mother. He couldn't feel her. This wasn't unusual. His dad and he were connected in a way that he didn't understand. He and his mom were close but he could rarely feel her energy and he only felt her heartbeat when she was close by. But still, something wasn't right. He could feel it.

He pressed redial. His dad's phone went straight to voicemail. He dialed his mom. No answer. He couldn't quite see the house from where he stood, so he decided to take the

back way through the alley. As he got closer, that something-wasn't-right-feeling he had when he exited the bus got stronger with each step. The hairs on his arms began to rise.

Mom was home waiting on me so why didn't she pick up and more importantly, why had dad called me seventeen times? And why was his phone going straight to voicemail? Dad always says that if something doesn't seem right, then it usually wasn't.

Zion always took his dad's words to heart and this wasn't an exception. He decided to cut through Dr. Bess's yard next door. He disappeared behind the five-foot azaleas that surrounded the five-acre estate. As he got closer to his own home, the something-wasn't-right-feeling manifested as a pale-like darkness, sort of like a cloud but pale and transparent. This darkness was rising from the ground and began slowly swallowing up the house, the ground and everything in its path. Zion's concern for his mother overruled the fear that kept telling him to run as fast and as far away from the house as humanly possible.

Instead of running away, Zion inched closer. He relied on the skills his dad had taught him – the skills to move without being seen. His dad had taught him how to use the surrounding environment for cover. He'd gotten so good that he could get within a few feet of a deer without it noticing.

The pale darkness had moved toward him as he moved toward it. He moved with as much stealth as he could muster, but the pounding of his heart reverberated in his ears. A few more steps and he would be totally immersed inside the pale darkness. Fear twisted inside his stomach, but he stepped forward anyway. There was no way he was going to leave his mom in the darkness.

Thoughts about his father swirled in his head while he hid and watched.

His dad wasn't aware but Zion knew... well, sort of... He knew his dad wasn't an international business consultant for

the government. When his dad would come home from work after days, weeks, sometimes months, he often carried the same scent that the darkness carried. Although he didn't know what his dad actually did for a living, he knew that it had something to do with guns.

Dad always had some super cool guns and was an even better shot than Zion was. But Zion was a better spy, though. Like now. He sat behind Dr. Bess's azaleas, while looking at his house less than ten yards away. The TV in the sitting room wasn't on. If it was, he would've been able to see the glare of the soap opera, "Guiding light," that was on everyday when he arrived from school.

He picked up the phone to dial his dad again. Voicemail. He watched. He prayed. He meditated.

As the day grew old and the sun's light and warmth diminished, so did his hopes. He looked at his watch. It was 6:30. A couple more hours and it will be completely dark, he thought. He could go to ground then. He shook his head. No. Going to ground meant he had to get to the basement. While he was trying to figure out his next move, his phone vibrated in his hand.

"Dad?"

"You all right, sun?"

"Yes. You know that pale white cloud I told you –"

"Sun, don't say any more. I need you to listen closely."

Zion nodded as if his dad could see him.

Treble began to sing. "After the morning after... After the night before... when all the fun is over..." He paused. "Remember where I taught you that song?"

Zion nodded. "Yes. Frankie Beverly and –"

"Can you get to that location?"

"I think... Yes. I can get there."

“Hurry, and move like you’re invisible – the way I taught you.”

“But, what about – ”

Treble didn’t give his son time to complete his thought. “I love you, sun.” The phone disconnected.

Treble passed on his love for 60’, 70’s, and 80’s R&B music to his son. Zion thought about the private concerts he and his dad would give for the birds, the trees and any and everything that was in listening distance when they jogged together.

Day had turned into evening and soon, evening would turn into night. The crickets were getting warmed up while Zion was setting his phone to navigation mode. He typed in Wes Montgomery Park, Indianapolis, In.

It was near the bleachers by the dilapidated park’s basketball court that Treble had taught Zion the lyrics to “The Morning After” by Frankie Beverly and Maze.

Four-point-two miles.

Music was sort of like Zion and Treble’s personal Morse code. After re-lacing up his Nike’s, he took a deep breath before looking north, south, east, and finally west before taking off. Like the biblical Lott, Zion didn’t look back, at least not until he’d put at least two blocks between him and the house.

That’s when a massive explosion made the ground under him tremble so hard that he stumbled into someone’s overflowing trashcan. He turned to the light he saw out the corner of his eye.

“Moookmmmmmm!” he shouted while reaching his arms out toward the flames. “Nooooo!!!!!!” he screamed, while banging his fists on the gray concrete alley floor. The raging flames that burned in the distance robbed the night of its darkness, making it easy for Zion to see that it was his house that was on fire. A huge cloud of gray smoke billowing toward

the heavens and beginning to spread its arms made him cough. His mother was gone. He was sure of it.

Most ten-year-olds would've completely lost it, but Zion was far from being like most ten-year-olds. In his reality, death did not exist. At the end of existing in the physical form, he was taught that the life source transitioned into another dimension of reality.

Knowing that his mother had transitioned and that there was nothing he could do for her, Zion got to his feet and turned back toward his destination and ran as if his life depended on it. As far as he was concerned, it did.

His lungs were on fire. His legs felt like jelly. He was on automatic pilot. Dogs barked as he ran through alleys and back yards. Grundy's Funeral Home came into view as he ran.

He bent over in the shadows of the rear entrance of the funeral home to catch his breath. Moments later, he looked up. Across the street, he could see lights on in the Elbert Lee Frazier Sr. Rec center next to Wes Montgomery Park. He checked his phone. No missed calls or texts. He looked left and then right. Traffic was sparse. His biggest test would be crossing over Northwestern Avenue's four-lane highway-like street. The park was right on the other side. He looked both ways and when he saw an opening, he took off running. Every muscle in his body cried out for relief.

He could smell weed as he crossed the street. A minute later, he saw some older kids kicking it on some swings while puffing on some Loud. (*Kids called this type of weed Loud because of the extra strong, pungent odor.*)

So busy looking at the older kids getting high, he ran smack dab into an older man dressed in black leather.

While bending down to help Zion to his feet, the man extended a hand.

Before the man made another move, Zion elbowed him in the nose.

“Bismillah,” the reddish brown black man spoke in Arabic after grabbing his nose and falling back down.

Zion sprang to his feet and jumped in the air and delivered a spinning roundhouse kick to the man’s temple, knocking him out.

Without hesitation, he went through the man’s pockets. No wallet or ID. Just two cell phones. Zion picked up the first one. It was a minute phone with only one number programmed into it – a number with a 404 area code. Oddly, no name was assigned to the programmed number.

He checked the other phone. It was loaded with contacts. He didn’t recognize any of the names so he began reading the stranger’s latest text messages. He stopped at the third text.

NOW... AFTER THE MORNING AFTER.... AFTER THE NIGHT BEFORE... WHEN ALL THE FUN IS OVER...

“Oh, nooo. I just knocked out one of Dad’s people. Shoot!”

“Yo, shorty, what’s crackin’?” One of the boys that was puffing on weed by the swings asked as he and another boy walked up.

“Set that shit out, shorty,” the boy wearing the white kufi said, pitching a hunting knife from one hand to the other. “If we gotta run after you, we gon’ carve you up like a Thanksgiving turkey.”

Zion rose from the ground beside the old man he’d just incapacitated. “Man, I don’t know what y’all talking about. I think this old head needs help though.”

“Shorty, we don’t care nothin’ about pops, all we care about is them ends.” The kufi-wearing leader said as he waved the hunting knife at Zion and the older man that was slowly regaining consciousness.

“Young man,” the man that Zion had incapacitated moments ago was slowly rising to his feet. “Are you Muslim?” he pointed.

“What’s it to you pops?” the boy wearing the white kufi asked.

“I’m Imam Abdullah Hakim Fast.”

The boy pointed. “Oh shit... You are Imam Fast.” The boy stared on as if he was in a daze.

“Miss us with that shit, ole man,” the other boy said. “Don’t nobody care if you Christ himself. All we care about is what you got in – ”

The boy wearing the Islamic headdress slapped his buddy upside the head. “Have some respect fool, that’s Dr. Fast.”

“Who?” the boy said, rubbing the back of his head.

“Dr. Hakim Fast. The most thorough Muslim scholar on the planet.”

The other boy puffed up. “Nigga, I’m here to get paid, not preached to.” The man-child that stepped up had the build of an NFL linebacker and the face of an angry boy.

The Muslim cleric extended his arms. “Son, you don’t wanna do – ”

The kid swung. The middle-aged half Native half African-American, Muslim leader ducked under the boy’s swing and came up with an uppercut of his own, cracking the rushing boy in the jaw. The boy was out cold before he hit the ground.

The boy wearing the kufi said, “May Allah have mercy on him and me. Allah hu Akbr,” the boy shouted before turning and running off into the darkness.

Dr. Fast turned to Zion. “Your dad sent me.”

“I know. I’m sorry for - ”

Dr. Fast said, “We have to go now.”

Zion ran after the Imam. Moments later, they were behind the Elbert Lee Frazier rec center standing next to a mean looking triple black Suzuki Hyabusa in the parking lot. Zion had a million questions, but he knew they would have to wait

until they were safe. The Muslim pastor took a black helmet off the bike's mirror.

“Put this on, sun.”

Zion did as he was told. He quickly mounted the dark horse. Once the mechanical beast roared to life, the two sped off into the night. Zion held on for dear life as the wind cut through his brown leather jacket. His teeth chattered as he tried to hold it together. He had no idea how long they'd been riding when they finally pulled onto a dark and deserted gravel street, past a gated field of junked cars. Two big black Rottweilers ran beside the fence as they pulled up to a huge rusted metal gate. Two signs quickly caught Zion's attention. The smaller black and red sign read: DOGS ON DUTY. The huge black and white sign read: HAND OF GOD RECYCLING AND USED AUTO PARTS.

The gated fence electronically began to open. Zion's eyes searched the night. He could feel the dogs near, but there was no sign of them as they drove through the gate. Zion held his legs up as high as he could as the mechanical black horse's wheels kicked up gravel while slow rolling through the automotive graveyard. They rode up to a large garage. Dr. Fast reached inside his black leather biker's jacket and pulled out a small remote. After pressing one of two buttons, two large gray metal doors opened sideways to reveal a lot of motors and car parts, and a plain looking white Ford Taurus station wagon.

They were dismounting when Imam Fast said, “Sun, I know you are confused and have a lot of questions.” He took off his helmet, revealing short reddish brown hair that matched his beard and mustache. “I need you to trust us.”

“Who's us?” Zion asked while giving the helmet back.

“We are the Council of Clerics, but right now I am a counsel of one for the moment.”

None of this made sense.

“You're wearing a look of disbelief on your face, sun. Let me alleviate your worries.” Dr. Fast began snapping his

fingers and tapping his feet on the garage's concrete surface. "Wake up everybody... No more sleeping in bed... No more backward thinking.... Time for thinking ahead..."

Zion tried his best not to laugh.

"Oh, you don't like my singing?"

"I've heard dogs howl better." He laughed.

By the time Zion was five, Treble had drilled into his son's head that anyone who came up to him and sang the first bar of the old school Harold Melvin and the Bluenotes song was someone to be trusted and followed.

He pointed to the station wagon. "Sun, there are turkey sandwiches, chips, and a cooler full of Gatorade in the back." Dr. Fast pointed to a door in the garage. "We have a long ride ahead of us sun and I do not want to stop until we get out of the Indiana," Imam Fast put a hand on Zions shoulder, "I need you to go use the restroom now, so we can hit the road.

TATU

April 2, 2002

REWIND TO YESTERDAY: Columbia Maryland

He flushed the toilet and walked over to the bathroom sink. He really wanted to shower, but time was of the essence. He was still trying to gather himself. Too much alcohol and way too much of her, he thought while staring at the stranger that stared back in the Double Tree Hotel bathroom mirror.

His throwback fifties always-perfect-in-place, James Dean hairstyle was anything but. Agent FX02 was too hung-over to be horrified at the Marilyn Manson identical spiked hair twin that stared back at him in the mirror. It had taken eight shots of Absolute and three Apple Martini's to get his latest chocolate conquest up to his room. By then he was too drunk to perform. All he wanted to do was lie down and close his eyes, but the dainty, baby faced, Victoria Secret's model turned into a sex-crazed wild woman. Agent FX02 was as fit as a professional boxer, but in his inebriated condition, he was no match for the vixen that awaited on the other side of the suite's bathroom door.

Ronald "FX02" Reagan turned his attention to the jiggling bathroom doorknob.

"Come on, Bob, a few more minutes," the vixen pleaded from behind the bathroom door.

"I told you, I have to go home to my wife," he lied.

"I'm not stupid, Bob. That was a man's voice on the phone earlier."

"My wife," he repeated. "Me and Bob have been together for five years."

"Bob, you know what? You are full of it. I can't believe that you think I am stupid enough to believe that you are in a relationship with another man named Bob."

"I'm not. . . I. . ."

"Save it. It's shit like this that made me step outside of my race in the first place, but you know what, Bob or whoever you really are, it doesn't make any difference if I date a brotha or an other, all men are the same."

Agent FX02 had a preference for dark meat although he hated Black men. Jungle savages, not much better than primitive beasts, he'd once said. That's why he was overly excited about the opportunity to black bag the CIA's version of Jason Bourne.

As he was getting dressed, he heard scurrying from behind the bathroom door. If he wasn't in such a rush, he would have found the situation hilarious.

He shook his head while thinking. *I've taken down twenty-seven targets in the last eighteen months and that's not counting the civilians that I had to kill in order to get to the intended targets, and now I'm hiding from a dog dumb, twenty-year-old black whore.*

"Lose my number, asshole. And before I leave, I just wanna let you know that you've proven the myth true. Black men are way bigger than white men."

The front door made a clicking sound as it closed.

Five minutes later, the front door to the suite made another clicking sound as the CIA assassin made a hasty exit.

While parked in the Double Tree Hotel's parking lot at a quarter 'til three in the morning, Reagan downloaded and read the file that Director Bush had sent to his PDA.

"Indianapolis, Indiana," he said aloud. "twelve hours to travel six-hundred thirty nine miles, enter the half-million dollar plus Indianapolis Golden Hill Estates home community and take out the targets."

After studying the blueprints to the seventy-year-old five-thousand plus square foot home, FX02 used his agency PDA to order the C4, wire, exploding caps, an integrated cell phone, a .50 caliber NTW-20 rifle with a infra red Bushnell scope, two fold-up tripods, and a hundred rounds of ammo. There was no reply, which was standard. The supplies, along with a clipboard, a tool belt, and a service uniform would be inside the Indianapolis Gas and Light van the CIA would provide once the private jet landed at the Eagle Park airstrip in the Indianapolis suburb of Speedway.

Five hours later, FX02 pulled into the open gates and around the horseshoe shaped driveway. He got out of the service van and looked up at the clouds.

"I guess if I believed in You, then I would ask that You not let it rain before I finished what I came to do." The agent shrugged. "But since I don't, I'll just let the fate of my actions order my way."

He checked his watch after walking to the front door. Five after ten, his Patek Phillipe read. The high-tech, military-designed watch also read radiation levels, as well as a host of other things that would determine if there were any immediate lethal threats such as land mines or other booby traps that are

active in the watch wearers immediate vicinity. After determining no imminent threat, he rang the doorbell.

“Yes? Can I help you?” A female voice with a strong Hispanic accent came over the intercom.

“My name is Nathan Beckford.” He loved using his hero’s identity, especially when his target or targets were Black. No one he’d killed ever questioned his name. None of his previous black targets ever knew that Nathan Beckford was the man that started the Ku Klux Klan. “There’s a gas leak in the area, I need to get inside to check your levels.”

“The meter’s on the side of the house,” she replied.

“Yes ma’am, I am aware of that, but I have to check the level inside of the house to see if there’s any danger.”

He could see through the thick stained glass front door window. The front room looked like a mini-museum. African-looking artifacts, masks, and pictures were all over the walls and the sparse but tasteful eclectic furniture.

“Invite him in, Consuela,” the agent heard another woman say.

A minute later, the clicking sound of locks and bolts turning made agent FX02 smile.

A portly young Hispanic woman held out her hand. “I need to see another form of ID.”

One punch to the neck crushed her Adam’s apple.

She reached for her throat and silently gagged as FX02 lightly pushed her aside, closed the door and headed in the direction of the live body that his watch’s heat source detected.

Malia Jones was in the kitchen stirring cake batter. Agent FX02 walked in the kitchen.

Malia looked up.

“Hello,” the CIA assassin said before raising his gun. “Goodbye,” he said before shooting her in the face.

She was dead before she hit the ground. FX02 had to hurry before the bowl of batter fell to the hardwood kitchen floor.

He put it back on the table, removed a black glove and dipped a finger in the bowl and placed it in his mouth. “Not bad. Not bad at all.”

An hour later, the house was wired and ready. He thought it best to wait inside for the kid to come home from school, but the agency didn’t know where XR13 was. And he’d received direct orders to wait and watch from the foreclosed home across the street. From there the director had said, he’d be able to see the boy getting off the school bus in front of the subdivision. This would give him enough time to get back over to the house and grab the boy for bait, just in case XR13 didn’t show or somehow got away.

Getting into the foreclosed house across the street undetected proved to be much more difficult than getting into the Frazier’s home. Designer burglar bars were on the first floor windows and doors on all four sides of the two-story brick Tudor style home. After driving the van into the alley he carried surveillance equipment, gun, and a rope and anchor into the back yard and placed the equipment inside the poolhouse a few feet from the main back doors. Director Bush had called the agent’s cell phone three times in the last ten minutes. He couldn’t scale the wall and get in the house and set the surveillance equipment up fast enough.

McLean, Virginia

The director’s home office looked like a library at a hunting lodge. The heavily wooded log cabin office boasted a wall full of books – all hard cover and many first editions. An impressive glass cabinet full of hunting rifles dating back to the sixteenth century took up another wall, while a moose, bear and a cougar’s head were mounted on the same wall where three 42-inch computer monitors hung. After yesterday’s tense meeting at headquarters, the director decided to work from

home, where he could drink his brandy while keeping abreast of FX02's progress. The situation was tense. XR13 had been his recruit, his real life 007. Over XR13's thirty-year plus unheralded career, Gerald had been his only handler. Only a handful of people knew the true identity of XR13.

No one outside of restricted circles in the spy community would ever believe that the world's most dangerous killer was an African-American. But just like all good things, everything comes to an end. It didn't matter that nothing damaging was recovered from the thumb drive, what mattered was that XR13 had recorded an unauthorized interaction, which was a level four security breach.

Gerald's peers had done exactly what he would have in a similar situation – pass the death sentence on XR13. Because Gerald had been remiss in his own security measures in allowing himself to be compromised on the recording, he, too, was well aware that his own mortality hung in the balance if he didn't quickly contain the situation.

On one monitor staring back at him was the agent assigned to snatch the boy if he didn't go straight home and on the other two monitors, Gerald could see the bright green manicured lawn and the long cobblestone driveway that led to the Jones's restored two-story 1930's four sided cobblestone home.

“Any word on the boy?” the director asked, while intently monitoring all three screens.

“Still, no sign,” FX02 said while watching the house across the street through a high-powered two-way camera scope. “The heat sensors I planted around the perimeter haven't registered any human movement.”

The director's voice was laced with concern. “It's getting dark. The kid should have been home by – ”

“Sir, do you still have a visual?”

“Yes, yes, zoom in closer,” the director ordered as he stared at the Black Lincoln that just pulled in front of the Jones’s.

“It’s him,” FX02 said.

Treble was getting out the back of a Black Lincoln.

“What do I do?”

“Take the shot,” the director said.

“The shot? I don’t even have my rifle set up. You never told – ”

“Shit.” The director cursed. “I’m sending in a team.”

“Sir?”

“In the meantime, if he leaves that house,” the director began before a thought crossed his mind. “Shit, he won’t leave out the front once he discovers the boy’s mother.”

“Sir?”

“Shit! Why didn’t I have someone covering the rear? Shit. Shit. Shit.”

Louder, FX02 said, “Sir?”

“What?” the director finally acknowledged the field agent.

“I planted enough C-4 on both floors to level the house.”

“I didn’t authorize . . . Why? Never mind. Good Job,” the director congratulated. “Do you have remote access?”

“Yes, sir. Cell phone digital code frequency.” FX02 spoke with an air of pride in his voice.

“By now he’s discovered the body,” the director commented. “Do it. Do it now!”

Two seconds after being given the order, a massive explosion rocked the forty estate homes in the upper crust neighborhood. Several homes were damaged, including the home that Agent FX02 was set up in.

“FX02, are you there? FX02?”

Ronald ‘FX02’ Reagan was disoriented as he slowly rose to his feet. Despite the ringing in his ears, he still could

hear his boss's voice. Pitch black a minute ago, now the upstairs bedroom where FX02 was perched was lit up like the noon summer sun.

"FX02, come in," the director said. "I've lost visual. FX02, come in."

The ringing in his head was almost unbearable. He closed his eyes and slowly crawled over to where he thought he heard the director's voice.

The rising smoke in his lungs made the agent cough, causing excruciating pain in his abdominal area.

"FX02, please respond. I've lost visual."

The agent assassin noticed the blood on his hands as he picked up the high-powered camera scope. He slowly inserted the four-way scope's earpiece back into his ear, allowing the director to regain his multidirectional visual.

"FX02," the director said. "You have several shards of glass protruding from your mid-section."

The agent looked down. His Indianapolis Gas & Light uniform was soaked with blood. He noticed several large shards of glass lodged in his stomach and chest area. "I need an extraction, sir."

"I know, but first look out the window. Tell me what you see."

The agent slowly did as he was told. "Too much smoke and debris." He fought back the desire to cough.

"The house. What about the house?" the director asked.

"Gone, that one and the two houses on either side."

"Shit. Shit. Shit. You killed civilians," the director said.

"I don't understand. I planted just enough C4 to bring down that house."

"You made a mistake in your calculations."

"No disrespect, sir, but I do not make mistakes. I know how much C4 I planted." He doubled over and coughed. "How long before the extraction team? I'm bleeding pretty bad."

“The press and the locals will be swarming the area any minute. It will be impossible for us to get a team to you as long as the locals are on the scene.”

“What are you saying?”

“You served your country well, son. Your wife and children will be well taken care of.”

“Wife and children? I’m twenty-seven. My wife is the agency and I have no children. Sir, I will die if no one comes soon.”

“I suggest you take the cyanide capsule,” the director said. “At least you won’t suffer.”

NNE

April 4, 2002

PRESENT DAY: Early Morning: Blountville, Tennessee

An average looking middle-aged black man wearing a priest's collar opened the huge gray metal doors as the white station wagon approached the private airport hangar. Once the station wagon came to a complete stop inside, Dr. Fast jumped out. "George Rawlings." Dr. Fast embraced the catholic archbishop. "It's been too long."

"Yes, it has been," the archbishop replied.

The archbishop looked at the sleeping form in the rear of the station wagon. "So, that's him?"

Dr. Fast nodded.

"The Messiah has risen," the archbishop said.

"Not exactly. I drugged him because of the trauma of losing so much in such a short time,"

"The child has been through a lot over the last few hours, but of course, God won't put a burden on him that he can not carry," the archbishop said.

“Allah hu Akbar,” Imam fast said while looking through the window at Zion’s sleeping figure. “The world is truly on his shoulders.” He turned to the Archbishop. “Give me a hand. Let’s get him onto the plane.”

The Cessna’s twin jet engines roared to life, causing the Catholic Archbishop and the Islamic scholar to shout over the noise.

“Does Dr. Boyce know that you gave the boy something?” the Archbishop asked while helping Dr. Fast carry Zion onto the plane.

“Yes, he didn’t seem too happy about it.”

The archbishop smiled. “Don’t pay any mind to John, he thinks all drugs are bad.”

“They are,” Dr. Fast said, “but, sometimes you have to take the bad and pray that good will come out of it. In any case, let’s just get the boy to Dr. Boyce in London.”

“London?” The Archbishop wore a confused look on his face. “Dr. Boyce lives in Atlanta.”

“I know but he’s in London addressing this year’s World Archaeological Society conference.”

“I’m baffled.”

“Did you forget that Dr. Boyce is one of the leading archaeologists in the world today?”

“No, of course I didn’t forget,” the archbishop said. “I guess I just assumed that you were taking Zion to Atlanta or to Oshun Orthine’s in Spartanburg.”

“You know what they say about those who assume?” Dr. Fast said. “Besides, Nigeria is a lot closer to London than it is to Atlanta or South Carolina.”

TANO

April 4, 2002

Langley Virginia: CIA Headquarters

“We interrupt this program for this late breaking news report,” the CNN anchor said. “We want to go straight to Andre’ Lamont, reporting live from Golden Hill Estates in Indianapolis. Andre’ what’s going on?”

“As you can see, three houses have been completely leveled. The fire department spent nine hours fighting the raging fire that erupted after a powerful explosion that could be heard and felt for miles around.”

The anchor’s voice interrupted. “Andre’, do the authorities know how the fire started?”

“Not yet. We do know that there were seven casualties.”

The director sat in front of his computer screen on a teleconference call with the NSA chief and the Chairman of the

Federal Reserve. All three watched as the news reporter on the scene finished his story.

“Sir?” A female CIA analyst stepped into the director’s office.

The director shook his head. “Not now.”

“But, sir?”

Director Bush turned his head. “Agent Reynolds, I said not – ”

“Sir, I really think you need to see this.”

The director turned back to the screen. “Excuse me, gentlemen.”

The Mitt Romney look alike rose from his seat and walked around his desk before escorting the analyst out of the office and into the hall.

“What do you have?”

She whispered, “FX02 wasn’t in the house across the street.”

“Okay, then where did you find him?”

She exhaled. “We didn’t.”

“That’s odd,” the director pondered. “What about the blood? Where did the trail end?”

“Sir, there was no blood. Not even a trace sample.”

Can’t be. I saw the explosion. If somebody was working with XR13, I’m dead. “Thank you, agent Reynolds.”

“I’ll have the full report to you within the hour.”

“That won’t be necessary. This one stays off the books.”

“You’re Red Flagging it?” She was referring to the term used when all records of a CIA mission were destroyed and that mission was deemed to have never happened.

“Yes, we are. As far as we know, agent FX02 could be anywhere. There was never an assignment where FX02 would have needed an extraction, right, Agent Reynolds?”

“Right, sir.”

“That will be all,” the director said before the young analyst turned around.

“By the way, Reynolds?”

She turned. “Yes, sir.”

Good agent. Hate to have to eliminate her. And I won't have to if she chooses Dubai, he thought. “Keep up the great work. And you should apply for the senior analyst position in Dubai. You'll have your own team, a five thousand dollar a month living stipend and...”

“I still have two years before I'm eligible for senior analyst, sir.”

“Agent Reynolds?”

“Sir?”

“I'm the director. I said apply.” He turned and headed back to his office, before he shouted, “Apply this week, Reynolds.”

Someone moved FX02. A professional. This had XR13's stamp all over it. But, he was dead. No way he could have survived. The chances of FX02 surviving were minimal at best. These and other thoughts swirled around in the director's head. Before he did anything he knew he had to answer the Why, then the Who, the Where would be easy when he answered the first two questions.

The director sat back in his seat and faced the monitor. “Sorry about that.”

The director's eyes were on the screen but his mind was analyzing and reanalyzing the events that unfolded right after the explosion.

All that blood. How did they get the carpet and FX02's body out so fast without anyone noticing? Only a professional could have cleaned that area and made it look like it had not been cleaned. This has XR13's writing all over it, and Treble knows that I can't implicate him, because I was his handler. My career would be finished. I would be finished if XR13 somehow lived and had a hand in killing and or abducting agent FX02.

The NSA chief's voice snapped the director out of his thoughts. "Gerald, you look like you just caught your best friend plucking your wife."

"I'm fine, Maurice. If we could get on with the briefing, gentlemen," the director said.

"While you were off playing with your pretty little analyst, I received DNA confirmation," the NSA chief said. "The bodies found in the Jones' house were positively identified as Malia Jones and Treble Jones's. Both were burned beyond recognition. The lab had to use bone marrow for the samples."

Director Bush breathed a heavy sigh of relief, but that relief only lasted seconds when the director realized that someone else had to know about the mission. Finding FX02 was now a top priority.

"Don't relax just yet, Gerald," the chief said. "The boy is still missing."

"So what, he's ten."

"Isaiah 11:6," the General remarked. "And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with them."

"So melodramatic, we are not living in biblical times, Maurice," the director admonished.

Bernard Schwartz, The chairman of the Federal Reserve interrupted. "That may be so, but we still don't know if XR13 had any recorded or documented evidence of the government's involvement with nine-eleven."

"Who cares? If XR13 is dead, he won't be able to corroborate the validity of any future evidence discovered," Director Bush said.

"If?" the NSA chief said. "You sound like you don't trust the labs findings, Gerald."

"No, I trust them. DNA doesn't lie," Director Bush said, not sure if he one hundred percent believed the words that had just come from his mouth.

“There is still the issue of the other seven bodies,” the NSA chief said.

“What issue? They’re casualties of war,” the director said.

“First, there is no war, Gerald and second they are, were American citizens. One of the so called casualties was a judge,” the General said.

“You’re an asshole, Maurice.”

“An asshole that doesn’t make mistakes or leave behind loose ends.”

“Gentlemen please,” the chairman pleaded. “Gerald, find a scapegoat fast, we don’t want the locals or the FBI to spend too much time on this. Someone needs to answer for the seven bodies. Innocence or guilt doesn’t matter. What matters is getting an ironclad conviction.”

“How do I – ”

The chairman interrupted. “Do I really need to tell you, Gerald? I mean, if we can fool the world into believing that two passenger jetliners brought down two structurally sound skyscrapers by attacking them from the top, framing someone for this should be a walk in the park. Do you foresee a problem with putting this Golden Hill Estate incident to bed, Gerald?”

“No, sir. No problem at all.”

“Just one more thing, Gerald.”

“Yes?”

“Find the boy.”

“And do what with him?” the director asked.

“Do you really need me to answer that?”

“He’s just a child,” the director said.

“The child of the most dangerous killer in the history of the agency.”

SITA

April 9, 2002

Four Days Later: Ile, Ife Nigeria

“Whew,” Dr. Boyce said as he used a handkerchief to wipe the sweat pouring from his brow. “It’s hotter than a whore house in hell on nickel night. How can you stand to be outside in this Nigerian heat, Baba?”

If man were created in the likeness of God, then Baba was created in the likeness of Marcus Garvey. Short, stout and dark, he even had a commanding presence reminiscent of Garvey. Even his mannerisms were Garveyesque, Dr. Boyce thought as the blazing African sun beamed down on his mentor’s sweating baldhead. The two men were out back, walking through the palace’s eight-foot high maze of seven million African Lillies. The man that answered to many names such as your highness, Ooni, Oduduwa and Baba, was dressed like a rich medieval king’s sorcerer instead of the Ooni of Ile-Ife, also known as the city where creation began.

Oba is the name for king in Yoruba culture, with the exception of the king of Ile-Ife, which is the Mecca, or the

Bethlehem of the Yoruba people. The Ooni is the name for the king of the sacred and legendary city of Ile-Ife, located in Southwestern Nigeria.

Baba's hands were clasped behind his back, as he seemed to float on air as he led Reverend Boyce through the winding five-acre maze of flowers and greenery.

"My Brother," the middle-aged dark skinned man stopped, closed his eyes and extended his heavily jewel clad hands and arms to the heavens. "What you feel are sun bursts of energy." Baba's chest rose as he tried to take in all the air out of the sky. Exhaling, he said, "Doesn't the warmth just invigorate you?"

"Yeah, I'm invigorated to get in some air conditioning. This African heat makes me think that the good Lord is hosting the world's biggest barbeque." Reverend Boyce stopped and looked at his friend's dress. "Baba, you have to be slow roasting in all that royal regalia."

There was a slight vibration in the earth as Baba bellowed out a deep good-natured laugh. "I'm used to the royal garments and head dress. I've been wearing them long enough."

"Can we please go inside the palace before all that red," the Reverend pointed at the heavy robe Baba wore, "catches on fire? And will you please take off that beaded head dress so I can see your face when we speak?"

"You know I can't remove my crown."

"It's only the two of us out here, Baba."

"You only see two of us, but I assure you there are more. And you know if any of them look into my eyes they will burn to ashes."

"They might as well look into your eyes and get it over with instead of being slow roasted in this oven heat."

Baba placed a huge dark hand on Reverend Boyce's back. "Come, let's go inside. I feel Zion's energy stirring."

“He’s awake?” Dr. Boyce asked as he followed the Nigerian king into the royal palace.

“Not yet.”

This was his third time visiting the palace in the last half-century. Each time, the face and body were different. The other Ooni’s bodies had died, but the spirit and soul in all of the Ooni’s were that of Baba Ududuwa.

His first encounter with Baba was in ’55, a few days after he’d spoken at the Bandung Conference in Indonesia. Dr. Boyce had flown straight from Indonesia to Nigeria on April 25, the day after the largest gathering of non-western world leaders was held. On the 26th Dr. Boyce was chest deep in sand and dirt. He had been on an archaeological dig two hundred miles northwest of the sacred city, Ile-Ife when he dug up a small wooden hand-carved black jewelry box. He had tried to open it, but it had been locked, so he took it inside his tent and dug up enough dirt to bury it until he could get back to it later that evening.

By the time he’d dragged himself into the tent that evening, back in ’55 all he had enough energy for was sleep. That night, the weirdest thing had happened. A god-like spirit had come to him in a dream. Normally, the reverend was a skeptic, but when he first met Baba Oduduwa in that dream forty-seven years ago, he had no doubt that the Ooni was who he proclaimed to be. To this very day, Dr. Boyce couldn’t even begin to explain how he had been so sure that Baba had been sent by the Creator to prepare the twelve men that would serve as the “Council of Clerics” to help nurture and protect the Messiah until they acquired the 360 degrees of knowledge needed to defeat Evil.

Spirit had explained to the Reverend Dr. that it was a jewelry box that could only be opened by a direct descendant of

the Yoruba goddess, Oba. Being that he was an archaeologist and a well-studied theologian, the Reverend Dr. was well versed in Ifa African centered spirituality. Dr. Boyce was one of a small handful of people living in the 50's that knew and had empirical evidence that Christianity was a derivative of Ifa spirituality.

At the time of his discovery, he was a twenty-eight-year-old African-American archaeologist working on his PhD in Christian theology. Thanks to Baba and the ancient texts he gave Dr. Boyce to study, he became the leading world scholar in Ifa, Islamic, and Christian spirituality. After several years of research, Dr. Boyce came to the conclusion that all three spiritual concepts were virtually the same, once you put them in their original context.

Baba and the Reverend Dr. were in the Ooni's library inside Baba's royal bedchambers. As if pressing in a code, Baba touched the number on the spine of three of the twelve volumes of the "Book of Knowledge" before the bookcase parted like the Red Sea. The two men stepped into the small elevator that the wall-to-wall bookcase opened up into.

Dr. Boyce wondered how far down they were going, and he was about to ask when the elevator slowed to a stop before the titanium doors opened.

"Amazing," Dr. Boyce said as he stepped out of the elevator and rubbed his hand across a gray rock wall. "Simply amazing." He rubbed his fingers together. "Gneisses, granite, and some other metavolcanic substance." Dr. Boyce continued studying the rock sediment on his hands. "No way to be sure without testing it, but I'm almost positive that this cave is Precambrian."

Baba stopped and turned to the Reverend Dr. "I don't know what that means?"

“It means that this cave is somewhere around two and a half to three and a half billion years old.”

“Three-billion, six hundred thirty-seven million, four-hundred seventy-six thousand, eight hundred and nineteen years, but who’s counting?” Baba said before he continued walking through the cave.

“That would mean – ”

Baba finished the Reverend Dr.’s statement. “This cave was here before man.”

Dr. Boyce stopped walking to marvel at the changing rock walls. “Amazing.”

Baba smiled. “I assure you Reverend, they are real.”

“When we brought Zion here four days ago,” Dr. Boyce pointed at the three-story cave walls, “all of this was just rock.”

“It still is.” Baba looked over at the transparent enclosure that Zion was resting inside of before walking toward his unconscious guest. “He did this.”

“How? Zion’s been unconscious the whole time he’s been here,” Dr. Boyce said as he walked up next to Baba.

“Both men were looking into the glass-like bubble chamber that held only a bed and Zion’s ten- year-old unconscious form.

“Right here where we are standing is where creation began. Ile-Ife was the first city and once upon a time it was known as the city of Gods. Being that young Zion here is the last descendant of Shango, the god of fire, lightning and thunder, his subconscious mind has manifested enough energy to cause these walls to transform into the diamonds that you are looking at.”

“The temperature would have had to be at least 2,200 degrees, probably a lot hotter for the rock to begin to change,” Dr. Boyce said.

“Don’t leave out the pressure,” Baba said, “It would take at least 725,000 pounds per square inch after the rock is heated to 2,200 degrees.”

“No man or animal can survive under those conditions, and this glass cage would have melted along with the bed,” Dr. Boyce said.

“I agree. But as you know, Zion is so much more than man or animated creature.” Changing the subject, Baba continued. “You know, before Shango’s deification he was a warrior king, the third king of the Oyo Empire – a true unselfish servant of the people – one of the very few rulers to have never been corrupted by power. God, Allah or Oludamare as I like to refer to the Supreme Creator bestowed certain aspects of his supreme wisdom to some mortals. Shango was one such. This supreme wisdom transformed mortal into a god – or for lack of a better word, an angel, an intermediary between man and Creator, sort of but not unlike Jesus, Moses, and Abraham. And remember my Christian friend; none of the four horsemen are mere mortals. And we know that Zion is destined to be the third horseman, the Dark Horse Assassin. He and the last descendant of Oba are *The Rise*, and they have but one God-given mission.”

SABA

April 10, 2002

NEXT DAY: Ile-Ife, Nigeria

The Reverend and Baba stood on opposite sides of Zion's hospital bed in the glass-like enclosure.

Baba reached out and took Reverend Boyce's hand while both men held one of Zion's. Next, Baba closed his eyes and barely above a whisper he began, "I Baba Oduduwa, servant of the most high command you Zion Uhuru Jones, last descendant of Shango, god of fire, thunder, lightning, and the personification of strategy to open your eyes."

Dr. Boyce jumped at the sudden eruption of thunder that exploded. Streaks of zig zagging lightning lit up the underground darkness.

Then, silence.

Moments later, steam began to ooze from the rock floor and walls. Baba's face was calm. He seemed serene as he watched the metamorphosis around them. The glass-like structure protected them from the conditions outside of the bubble that they were in. The Reverend Dr.'s earlier

amazement had turned to fear as he watched the floors and the walls heat up until they were a bright burnt orange.

The Reverend Dr. turned to Baba. "Make him stop before we start to cook."

"Don't be afraid, Reverend. This enclosure is resistant to weather or gravity. I designed it myself," Baba said as balls of fire jumped off the walls and flew across the cave like small meteors. Several baseball to basketball sized fireballs banged against the enclosure

Reverend Boyce was too busy being terrified when Zion's eyes began to flutter.

The roof and the sides of the enclosure were suddenly assaulted by flaming hot falling rock, and soccer ball sized balls of fire. The concrete floor outside the bubble looked like orange taffy as it began to liquefy. The steam from the molten rock began to cloud the glass like structure. Visibility was almost zero.

As suddenly as the storm began, it stopped.

"Oduduwa," Zion said as he slightly turned his head to Baba.

Baba smiled.

Zion turned his head to the Reverend, who was now at Zion's side. "Uncle John."

Fifteen minutes later, the ground and walls had cooled enough for Baba and the reverend to roll Zion's bed into another cavern. This one was well lit, unlike the cavern they'd just left. The small cavern they were now in resembled a high tech clinic.

"Zion, I am going to remove the wrapping from your feet and legs first and then I will make my way up to your head," Baba explained.

"If you just changed his facial features, why the mummy wrap on his whole body?" the reverend asked.

"Purification. The linen strips are soaked in herbs that remove all impure substances on and inside the body. It also

helps wounds heal fast without any scarification,” Baba said as he removed the off white linen mummy wrapping.

“How does he know who we are?” Dr. Boyce asked.

“I can still hear you Uncle John,” Zion said.

“Uhm. I apologize.”

“No need. My dad told me who you were.”

“Your dad... he’s dead.” the Reverend Dr. said.

“Transitioned,” Zion said. “Dad, me, you, no one ever dies. We are all masses of energy. And Energy cannot be created or destroyed. It only transforms.”

“So, you are in communication with your father?” the reverend asked.

“Dad speaks to me in my dreams. I have no control over how and when he comes.”

“Actually, you do,” Baba said.

“I do what?”

“You have the power to control these communications with your dad, and other spirits. You just don’t know how.”

“And this is what you are going to teach me?” Zion asked Baba.

“This and so much more.”

Baba was unwrapping the linen from Zion’s face.

Reverend Boyce’s eyes got big as the wrapping was peeled away.

“What’s wrong, Uncle John?”

“Nothing,” he said in awe. “Nothing at all.”

Baba put a hand mirror to Zion’s face. “Sun, you are in danger and you will be in danger as long as you dwell the earth. The facial reconstruction provides you with anonymity for now.”

“Anna who?”

“Anonymity. The enemy won’t be able to recognize you, now that I have reconstructed your face,” Baba said.

Zion looked at the foreign image that stared back at him in the mirror. He touched his nose and then his lips. "What about my name? Shouldn't we change it, too?"

Baba shook his head. "No. By the time the enemy does find you, it will be time for you to be found and your name will tell the world who you are."

Zion played with his new face while he listened to Baba.

"You'll get used to it," Baba said.

"It's cool." He opened his mouth as wide as he could then closed it. Zion repeated this several times. "My new face is really cool. I just hate that there are no scars."

"You want scar tissue on your face?" the Reverend Dr. asked.

"All great warriors have scars," Zion spoke in a knowing tone. "Scars mean you're battle tested."

"What makes you think that you are a battle tested warrior?"

"My Dad told me all about Shango, my great, great, great, times infinity grandpa. Dad said that Shango was one of the greatest warrior kings. He said he was a loved and popular ruler and warrior because of his meticulous strategizing, and fairness. Dad said that all the male descendants of Shango lived and fought so I could be here to complete the oracle. Only thing is Dad didn't tell me what the oracle was or how I was going to complete it."

"To complete the oracle you must defeat the author of confusion and division."

"Huh?"

"He's ten, Baba, you might wanna wait until he learns more African history."

"He may be ten, but he has the wisdom of a god," Baba said. "Besides, we only have seven years to teach him when it takes forty years to unlock all the mysteries of the human mind."

“Alexander was schooled for seven years in the sacred mystery schools in Ionia and he was able to conquer an empire that stretched from the Balkans to Pakistan,” Dr. Boyce said.

Baba picked up where the Reverend Dr. left off. “Alexander the Great was also a paranoid schizophrenic who had many of his close friends executed because of his extreme paranoia. He died a very lonely man,” Baba said. “Many thought that his paranoia came from his early exit from the mystery schools. And they were right. With only seven years in school, he didn’t understand how to put the information he had in formation to the ten spheres of hue-manity,” Baba lifted a finger in the air, “And that, Zion, is what drove him insane.”

“So, does that mean that in seven years I’m going to go crazy?”

“I surely hope not,” Dr. Boyce said. “With a destiny such as yours and a name like Zion Uhuru to wear as a badge, crazy won’t be able to get into your head.”

“Why was I named Zion?”

“Why not Zion?” Dr. Boyce replied. “It means promised land.”

Baba intervened. “Which refers to the land of peace, and of course, you can’t have peace without freedom, and that’s the second half of your name and who you are. It means freedom. Zion Uhuru. Peace and freedom. Man has been fighting for these two concepts since the Pale one animated self into a serpent and introduced mankind to sin and death.

Zion’s eyes widened. “My mother... did the explosion...Is she...?”

Baba nodded. “I’m afraid so, but you already know this, sun.”

“I... I didn’t want to believe it.”

“It’s okay to show emotion, sun,” Dr. Boyce said as he squeezed Zion’s hand.

“I’ve been grieving in my sleep for however many days I’ve been sleep,” Zion said. “Dad helped me to understand.

Mom doesn't come to me in dreams like dad does. So, I miss her way more, but dad tells me that mom is watching me and that her love is all around me and will never leave me."

"You've been through a lot for a ten-year-old," the Reverend Dr. said.

"That's what I told Dad. He said that I've gone through and will only go through forests and down roads that God has planned."

"So earlier, you said that Treble did not explain the Creator's plan for you?" Baba asked.

"No. But he did tell me to trust you and Uncle John."

"Are you scared?" Baba asked.

"Of what?" Zion asked.

"Of today, tomorrow, your new life, anything, everything," Baba said.

"No."

"Good," Baba said. "Zion, two million one hundred and forty thousand years ago, man was born of the Creator. Before then, there was just peace. No thought, no movement, no thing. The creator was only conscious of being conscious. That all changed when the creator decided to bring Itself into being. Then from the image of love, hue-mankind became. At the beginning of man, man had only one date and that was a birth date. Death did not exist until one of God's little gods, became jealous. This jealousy caused this god to try and thwart the Creator at every turn. So, Zion when God created this World, everything in it was in harmony. It was perfect; all of it was the Promised Land, and there was only freedom until this jealous god came down to earth in physical form and introduced sin to this Promised Land free world."

Zion turned to Dr. Boyce. "Uncle John, is a god the same thing as an angel?"

The reverend replied, "A god, little G, is a special angel – one that the Supreme Creator uses to help mankind

understand the scope of the Creator's infinite wisdom and power."

"So, is that why in the Bible God says do not bring any god before me."

Dr. Boyce nodded. "I guess it is."

Zion turned his head back toward Baba. "I'm sorry, Baba. So, what happened after sin came to the world?"

"Well, when sin was introduced death followed as a result. And since that time, the Supreme Creator has sent Her spirit, which She made manifest in human form to teach the people of the World how to avoid being slaves to sin. Each time that messenger left, many of those people, particularly the well-to-do and ones that wielded earthly power over others reverted back to coveting objects that the author of Death put before them."

The reverend picked up without missing a beat. "And now, the most popular and powerful country in the world has morphed into a modern day Babylon," the reverend paused to let his words sink in. "Zion you are the last messenger of God. Christians refer to you as the Messiah; Muslims refer to you as the Mahdi. Revelations chapter six verse eight, *'and I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.'*"

Baba added, "There was also another horse, a dark horse, it's rider a judge, an assassin. *The Rise*."

"So, the pale horse rider is death, and I am the Dark Horse Assassin that has come to fight him?" Zion asked.

Baba shook his head. "No. You are *The Rise* and you have been sent to destroy Death," Baba said, "and you do know that when we refer to Death, we are talking about Evil. But,

before I send you to the battlefield, I must devote the next seven years preparing you for war.”

“Why seven years?”

“It was supposed to be forty,” Baba said. “Your dad had just completed the fifth tier in his sixth tier priesthood education. He still had six years to go when doors in his conscious mind opened up and allowed him to briefly see through the Creator’s eyes. He saw you, Zion. He saw you and your Queen on dark horses.”

“My Queen?”

“Let me back up,” Baba said. “Shango was more than a warrior king. He became a god, or one of the Creator’s angels, whichever word you prefer. Oba was the first of Shango’s three wives. She, too, was a fierce warrior. She even taught Shango knife fighting, but the strongest virtue Oba carried was, her love for Shango. She loved him so much that she cut her own ear off and attempted to feed it to him in hopes of winning his love back, instead Shango was so angered that he banished her from the kingdom and she fell to earth.

“At the time, Shango didn’t know that one of his other wives had tricked Oba into the self-mutilation. And since the banishment, Shango has never been the same. His strength decreased and he wasn’t the supreme strategizer that he was when he was with Oba.” Baba paused in hopes that he was not confusing Zion’s young mind.

“Zion, you have to find the last descendant of Oba. Once you gain her unconditional love, then and only then will you have the strength and wisdom to defeat the Pale Horse rider.”

“Okay, let me make sure I understand you correctly,” Zion said. “I have to stay here, where ever here is, for seven years. In that time I have to acquire forty years of knowledge, then I have to find some girl that I have no idea what her name is and make her fall in love with me and then I have to go and save the world by killing Evil?”

Baba nodded. "Basically."

"Sounds like a low budget straight-to-DVD horror movie."

"What is a ten-year-old doing watching low budget horror movies?" the reverend Dr. asked.

"I don't watch them, Uncle John. I'm just saying..."

"What are you just saying?"

"I'm just saying that you two are putting a lot of pressure on a ten-year-old kid. Bay, Spielberg, and Cameron together couldn't sell this story line to Hollywood and you want me to do this in real life."

"Sounds about right," the reverend Dr. said. "How 'bout it, Baba?"

"Uhhh, more or less," Baba said. "As I help you expand your mind and body, you will grow more confident," Baba said. "The young lady, the last descendant of Oba, her whereabouts will not be as difficult to locate as you might think."

"Come with me, Zion, you, too, Reverend," Baba said as they walked back into the huge amphitheater-like hollow cave where Zion recovered over the past few days.

"Baba, when did my daddy know that I was the Dark Horseman?"

"Seven days ago?"

"The day before the explosion?" Zion said.

"Yes." The Reverend Dr. nodded. "I was in London at the time, but Treble was in Spartanburg with my sister Oshun Orthine. She initiated your father into the sacred Amun priesthood when it came to him in a vision. He said, we had been wrong, that you were *The Rise* and he went on to explain to me what you needed to do in order to complete the oracle. Your dad was extremely disturbed. He was even more disturbed when I explained to him that we had always known who he was and who you are."

“The day of the explosion, Treble called from Atlanta. He said that he had to get to the airport, that you and your mother were in danger. That was the last time I spoke to him.”

Zion looked at both men. “I think I might know the last descendant of Oba. I think she’s a little girl around my age.”

“What makes you think that?” Dr. Boyce asked.

“Well, every since I was a little kid, I’ve had these dreams.”

“What dreams?” Baba asked.

“Well, when I was real little, a long time ago, she was real little, too. We played catch, pitching a soccer ball back and forth with our minds. The ball would stop right in front of our chests. Over time as I aged, she did, too. In one dream we were fishing, in another we were racing on our bicycles.”

“How often do you have these dreams?” Baba asked.

Zion shrugged his shoulders. “I don’t know. Maybe once, twice, three, maybe four times a year.”

“When was the last time?” Baba asked.

“She and I were just about to get on the Mindbender at Six Flags before you woke me.”

“Today?” the Reverend Dr. asked.

Zion nodded.

“What’s her name? What does she look like? Where does she live?”

NANE

April 10, 2002

SAME DAY: Night: Lithonia, Georgia

Pleasant Pointe apartments were anything but pleasant. Dekalb County should've fined the complex owners for misleading advertisement. The Hell's Haven apartment complex was a more fitting name for the low-budget housing complex in the Atlanta suburban area.

The big arrow, had just met up with the little arrow and they both were pointing due north on every accurate clock and watch in Atlanta. To a vampire, the night was young. On this Friday night the bloodsuckers were out in full swing. Pushers, prostitutes, tricks, and thieves waiting for an opportunity lingered in private and public areas in the one way in/one way out drug and crime infested community.

There wasn't even a full moon out and folks were acting more of a fool than usual. Used condoms, needles, broken glass, cigarette, cigar butts, and used diapers littered the complexes two playgrounds. There seemed to be more dope dealers than fiends hanging around the rear playground.

Millions changed hands weekly on the rimless half basketball court and over by the rusty swing set frame.

In middle class white suburbia, at midnight on Saturday night, most ten-year-olds were in bed, maybe even watching television or playing video games but here, they were running up to cars, exchanging nickel size ten foil packs filled with crack and powder cocaine for money.

“Yum-Yum!” Sunny shouted, catching the little boy’s attention.

The boy turned his head to the two women.

“Get your narrow butt home, ‘fore I knock you out.”

Yum-Yum looked back at the three older boys that he ran dope for before turning back to Sunny. “What you need to do Ms. Brown is find you some business and leave mine alone ‘fore you won’t have no business at all.”

Assata grabbed Sunny’s arm. She knew her best friend too well.

“What did you just say? Did that li’l nappy head nigga just threaten me?” Sunny asked, stepping toward him.

The kid waved an arm as if shooing her away before turning around and heading back to the curb where the older boys were passing around a blunt.

“Oh shit,” one of the older boys said.

When Yum-Yum turned around, Sunny was right there.

Pop! She slapped the little boy across the face.

“Bitch!” he shouted as he put a hand to his stinging jaw.

Sunny kicked off her heels and put the ten-year-old in a strangle hold, while using her other hand to take off his belt.

“Let me go. Stop! Stooooopppp! You ain’t my mamma!”

“Thank God for that,” she said while removing his belt.

Whap!

“Owww!”

“Shoo me away again.”

Whap!

“Owww!”

“And, who you calling a bitch?”

Whap!

“Owwww!”

“Don’t you ever talk back to grown folks, boy!” Sunny looked up at the three older boys. “Y’all oughta’ be ashamed, using this baby to sell your dope.”

The smallest of the three had his pants hanging below his knees, one foot on the ground the other on the red brick low budget apartment housing wall.

He turned his Miami Heat hat to the back. “Yo, sis, word up, on everything.” He grabbed his crotch area. “You can get it. Straight up.” He held a small bankroll out toward Sunny. “Just throw out a number, shawty.”

Sunny ignored the dope boy for the moment. She pushed Yum-Yum away. “Now run home and tell your momma I beat your behind and tell her why I tore that tail up.”

He turned and started walking.

“Oh, he think I’m a play toy. “She took off one of her heels and threw it, barely missing him. “I said run, boy,” she shouted.

Yum-Yum took off down the street.

Next, Sunny turned and snatched the wad out of the dope boy’s hand. “This will do.”

The dope boy took his foot off the wall and used one hand to pull up his pants. “That’s damn near a stack, sis.” He reached an arm out toward her.

She put the money inside her bra and started unbuttoning her dress.

“Yo, whachu doin?” one of the other boys asked.

“I’m takin’ off my clothes.”

“Why?” the first boy asked.

“I’m ‘bout to earn this money you just gave me. Now get naked, little man. We can do it right here.” Sunny pointed to a small grassy area where a couple of fiends stood.

“Nah, sis, yo, I was just uh...”

“You was just, what?” Sunny looked at the boy with both hands on her hips.

“I was just – ”

“You was just talking out your ass and now shit coming out your mouth,” Sunny said as she began buttoning up her red form-fitting dress.

“Whateva, sis. But yo, you gon’ have to come up off my cheddar,” he said, holding out his hand.

The three didn’t notice the shadow approaching from the left.

She pointed at her breasts. “You talkin’ about this money I just earned?”

“Earned? If you don’t unass my bankroll.” He lunged forward as Sunny stepped back.

The boys froze at the sound of a bullet being chambered. Assata had her .380 inches from the lunging boy’s adams apple. “Now we can handle this one or two ways,” Assata said. “I can make the world a better place and at the same time help bring your families together in one home or you can apologize to my girl.”

After all three apologized, the little one asked, “What about my bankroll?”

Assata looked over at Sunny.

“What about it?” Sunny’s bestfriend asked.

Sunny reached into her bra and pulled out the rubber-banded stack of cash, “You can get it, shorty,” Sunny said.

“Yeah, little man, you can get it right now,” Assata said as she grabbed at her crotch area.

“Pull it out, little man and you can get it all. I mean drop ‘em down to your ankles, take off that big ass T-shirt. I wanna see what you workin’ with. And if I think I can work with what you workin’ with, than we can go back to my place and put in some work,” Sunny said.

“Stop playin’, sis. All that ain’t even mine,” the boy said.

“Do I look like you? I mean, really?” Sunny asked the boy.

“Nah,” he said with a confused look on his face, “Why you ask that?”

“Cause you keep calling me sis, like we related, now drop ‘em or we out.”

The three boys just stood there doing nothing and saying nothing.

Sunny pulled out a twenty before she threw the wad at the boys. “Punk asses. You three best find you another corner, cause just like the eviction party me and my girl just left, you are evicted from this corner. Don’t let me see you three here tomorrow night. Is that clear?”

“Yes ma’am,” the three boys responded in unison.

Sunny held out the twenty she just removed. “Here, let me get a quarter of that mid. I don’t want none of that loud, y’all smoking.”

A few minutes later, the two best friends were sharing a joint on the back porch of Sunny’s project apartment.

“Girl, you a plum fool. I can’t believe you whipped that boy’s behind in front of his friends.”

“I don’t know why you can’t believe that. You know me. I can’t stand no bad behind, disrespectful kids, I don’t care whose they are. I might beat his little behind again next time he come over asking to play with Mira.” She held her hand up in front of Assata. “Little nappy head monster made me break one of my nails. I just had them done. Fifteen damn dollars down the drain.”

“Girl, that fifteen dollars is nothing if one of those dope boys would have knocked your head into next week.”

“Now you know,” Sunny gave Assata a you-know-me-better-than-that look, “them boys may be dumb, but they not stupid,” she said while puffing on the cannabis.

“I swear I thought the little Jermaine Dupree look-alike was about to pee his pants when I held Betsy to his forehead,” Assata said.

“Let’s just hope them boys are smart enough not to come back. I hate to have to spill blood on my own doorstep.

“It wouldn’t be the first time,” Sunny said.

“On another note, how many times is Butter gon’ throw an eviction party, damn?” Assata asked.

Sunny held up three fingers. “This is the third one in three months and she still there.”

“And we still go and pay our ten dollars each time, and we will be there next month when she does it again.”

“And you know that’s the truth,” Sunny said while giving Assata a high-five before pulling five wallets out of Assata’s purse and laying them out on the concrete in front of them. “Like taking money off the dead. Butter have it so dark in there, niggas be so close together tryin’ to rub on somebody’s ass, they don’t even feel our hands in they pockets.”

“I heard Butter made so much the first time that she caught up both months and paid all the late fees.”

“Wouldn’t have been difficult. Her rent ain’t nothing but eighteen dollars. I don’t even see how you can’t come up with eighteen damn dollars every month,” Sunny said. “She look all right. She still got her youth. She coulda’ tricked off with one of these sorry ass dope boys to get that little money.”

“Sunny,” Assata said, “Butter ain’t no ho.”

“She needs to be whatever and do whoever if it means keeping a roof over her and them two little girls heads.”

Assata made small clouds of smoke as she exhaled. “Heffa, every woman can’t just spread her legs to get a bill paid.”

“I don’t see why not. Just cause you done been to church four Sundays in a row don’t mean you earned a halo, ho. Remember Mr. Stokes,” Sunny said.

“Girl, I was only fifteen. That don’t count.”

“Hell if it don’t.”

“I was gon’ get held back. Ain’t no way I was gon’ repeat the tenth grade, and besides Mr. Stokes know he was full of fine.”

“He was a married forty-year-old science teacher with kids older than we were.”

Assata shrugged. “I was young and dumb, and besides it wasn’t like I was no virgin.”

“Stop making excuses, girl, just admit it,” Sunny said. “You a ho.”

“Hold on, if memory serves me correct,” Assata crossed her arms and nodded her head, “Mr. Stokes had his way with you, too. So, what does that make you Ms. Lady?”

“First, Reginald didn’t have his way with me.”

“So, you on a first name basis with the father of his wife’s children?” Assata said.

“Back then, I was,” Sunny said. “After you told me how he made your river flow, naturally I had to see what all the flowing was about. And the difference between you and me is I got sixty dollars out of my test drive.” Sunny pointed a finger in Assata’s direction before continuing. “And that makes me a prostitute, not a ho.”

“I know that sorry behind Raynelle didn’t pay for nothing.”

“Nothing but raping me,” Sunny said.

Assata dropped the blunt on the concrete below.

“Sunny, I’m sorry girl. I wasn’t thinking.”

Sunny put a hand on Assata’s. “I’m used to it,” Sunny said.

“Used to what.”

Sunny smiled. “You not thinking.”

“Seriously, Sunny, do you ever think about that night?”

“All the time.”

“Mira is ten, so Raynelle has been in prison for a minute,” Assata said. “Ever wonder if he’s innocent?”

“Back then, I hadn’t been with anyone else since Mr. Stokes. And I did him six months before Little Dave’s going-to-jail party. Mira is proof that Raynelle raped me.”

“You were drugged. You didn’t remember what happened. All you know is that you woke up in a strange bed in a big ass mansion with your pants and panties at your ankles. I’m just sayin’, you even said that the house was wall-to-wall bodies. What if someone else came into that bedroom, like Raynelle said?”

“Raynelle brought me to that party. If he didn’t stick it in, he might as well have. I was fifteen at a kingpin’s going-to-jail party. Raynelle was eighteen. He obviously left me alone.”

“I know all that, but the man done did a dime and he still got eight cents left before he even comes up for parole and if he gets out then, he’ll be branded as a sex offender for the rest of his life.”

“Why are we even talking about this eleven years after the fact?”

“I don’t know. Last Sunday, Dr. Logun spoke about hate and forgiveness...”

“Damn, girl, you drinking the kool-aid for real. You know good and well that pastors ain’t nothing but pulpit pimps.”

“Not Dr. Logun at First Afrikan. He puts the prosperity preaching pulpit pimps on blast. He even calls America what it really is, Amerika-ka-ka,” Assata said.

“You sound like all the rest of the deaf, dumb, and blind,” Sunny remarked. “Besides Assata, ain’t you the one that said, Black folks that go to church are modern day slaves because they still worshipping the same way the slave master made them, and they still praying to the slave master’s God expecting to be saved?”

The patio door opened.

Her dark brown zombie eyes stared right through Sunny. The sky blue gown she wore was the only thing that

moved as the ten-year-old stood at the door. The little girl was a four foot six, dark coffee brown statue wearing an emotionless stare.

“Mira, what’s wrong, baby?” Sunny asked.

“He’s getting bigger,” Miracle said.

“Who’s getting bigger, baby?”

“The boy.”

“What boy?”

“My friend, the one I dream about.”

Sunny held her arms out. “Come here, baby.”

Miracle took a couple timid steps forward.

Sunny got down on one knee and took her daughter in her arms.

Miracle wrapped her arms around Sunny’s neck.

Assata stood back admiring the scene unfolding between mother and daughter.

Sunny held Miracle at arms length. “Baby, I told you that there is nothing wrong with dreaming. I don’t know why you keep dreaming about this boy, but as long as the dreams are pleasant, there’s no need for worry.”

“But Momma, I think he’s in trouble.”

She put her daughter down and knelt down in front of her. “He’s not real, Mira. How many times do I have to tell you that?”

“He is real, momma. He is.”

“Did you just raise your voice at me, little girl?”

Miracle shook her head.

“Answer me when I speak to you.”

“No, ma’am.”

“Go back to bed and I don’t wanna hear another peep about that little boy in your dreams.”

Miracle stood in front of her mother, silently gritting her teeth.

“Do you hear me talking to you, little girl?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“You better act like it. Now you best take some of that huff out your voice and go on back to bed.”

Miracle turned and walked back in to the house.

“You make me sick,” Miracle mumbled while closing the patio door.

Sunny got up. “Let me get my belt.”

Assata grabbed Sunny’s arm. “Girl, don’t let her get you all worked up, ruin a good night, with good company, good weed, and,” she looked at the five wallets on the concrete, “those.”

Sunny picked up one of the wallets after sitting back on the upside down paint bucket. “I love that little girl with everything I got, but I swear sometimes she makes me wanna reach out and smack her eyes in the back of her head. What’s wrong with these kids today?”

“They momma and daddy’s are crazy and they bring babies in this world and they make them crazy, but Black folk just ignore crazy,” Assata said.

“Whachu saying, Assata?”

“Don’t get all defensive on me, girl. I’m just speakin’ truth. ‘Member Cornbread Gibson?”

“Man-man’s brother,” Sunny said. “Girl, how can I forget that fool? No telling how many dope boys he robbed.

“Riding the bus and train all around town, going into projects he had no business in, robbing dope boys with a toy pistol. God sure had his back.”

“Until one of Red’s boys shot him in the face,” Sunny said.

“You have to admit Sunny, if Cornbread had been laying on some note-taking psychiatrist’s couch, he might not be lying six feet under in a casket.”

“Yeah, I guess you right,” Sunny said. “The 90’s were stupid crazy.”

“That’s what I’m saying, girl. Black folks see crazy every day, but we just blow it off as if crazy just supposed to

get sane over time. You always hear about rich white folks lying on someone's couch telling all they business. They even done gone to calling them therapists, life coaches, and support systems, instead of psychologists. Hell, I bet Tupac and Biggie woulda' been alive today, if they would've gotten some help."

"What make you think Tupac and Biggie had a few screws loose?" Sunny asked.

"As much money and poo-tang as they was gettin', and they acted like crabs in a barrel instead of kings on a throne..."

"I know where you goin' with this Assata and I don't like it."

"I'm your best friend, hell, I'm your only real friend. We go back to middle school. We've screwed and have gotten screwed together. I even lied on the stand to help get Raynelle put away."

"What does all of that have to do with the price of tea in China?"

"Huh?" Assata asked.

"It's a saying. Means what does all that you are saying have to do with anything?"

"It means I love you unconditionally and I want for you what I want for myself. You know I love my goddaughter as much as anyone. I just think we should consider getting her tested."

"Tested! Tested for what?"

"I don't know. She's been having these dreams about this little boy for years. What about the way she sneaks up on people. She moves like a ghost. And last month -"

Sunny interrupted, "The way she makes things do what they aren't supposed to do from time to time has nothing to do with her mental stability. Last month was just some freak power surge."

"Freak power surge." Assata crossed her arms. "We came here after we rocked Macy's for three grand in clothing to find your lights had been cut off. Apartment darker than doom.

Cut-off notice taped to the front door. We go in Mira's room and she's at her desk doing homework – homework sitting under a brightly lit desk light that was plugged in to one of the plugs that had no power. A desk light that cut off when Mira realized that we were in the room.”

“Assata, you are my girl to the end of the end, but Miracle is my child and I will not waste money I don't have and time that I can't afford to take my daughter to some note-taking, dumb question-asking stranger. And what you think they gon' say when I ask if my baby is touched. You know good and damn well they gon' say my baby's nuttier than a peanut factory. That way they can keep seeing her, getting more money that I don't have. So, now that you done killed my high,” Sunny handed Assata her cut from the wallets, “I'm going to bed.”

Assata rose to her feet. “One last question.”

Sunny shook her head. “Not if it's about my baby's sanity.”

“Nah, I've said my piece on that. I was just thinking about you and Mr. Stokes.”

“What about me and Mr. Stokes?”

“Well, remember when we went down to the free clinic the first time.”

“Yeah, I thought I was pregnant with his baby.”

“You weren't,” Assata said.

“Right.”

“The doctor said you couldn't be, because your uterus was abnormal,” Assata said.

“He also said I could never have children and less than four months later, I became pregnant. Only reason I didn't have an abortion was because Dr. Polski had said I was never going to be able to conceive.”

“Ole Dr. Polski, don't even know he really the one that named Miracle,” Assata said.

“Yep. Miracle Joy Brown.” Sunny smiled. “The brown miracle that brought me joy by coming into being.”

“You ain’t never been pregnant but the one time, girl, you never know.”

“Know what,” Sunny said.

“Might not have been Raynelle.”

“Assata, why you suddenly all up in mine. Damn.”

“I’m just saying. You should have them do a DNA test.”

“Who is them? No, never mind. I done told you, Assata. It don’t make no difference who the father is. Raynelle shouldn’t have left me alone for one minute in that big ass house. Bottom line, I was raped and somebody got me pregnant.”

“You said my daddy was dead.” Miracle stood in front of the patio door.

“Shit.” Assata put a hand over her heart. “Good Lord, girl you ‘bout scared me to death. I didn’t even hear the door slide open.”

“I knew he wasn’t dead. I just knew it.” She patted her chest. “I feel him in here.”

TISA

November 21, 2005

THREE YEARS LATER: Langley, Virginia

At his father's prodding, forty years ago, Gerald Bush went to work for J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI as a senior field agent, a position that usually took at least ten years to earn. All his life he was pushed to the front and almost every promotion and accolade he'd received was because of his father. Senator Bradley Bush was a big brash bull that wielded his political power like a sword, cutting down anyone that stood in his path. Gerald's father was known by friend and foe as the Bull. Bull was short for bulldozer, although most thought Bully was a better moniker for the overbearing huge man that always seemed to have a cigar in his mouth or between his fingers.

Gerald was the complete opposite of his father. He'd avoided hard work like the plague his entire life. While bullying wasn't Gerald's way, finding ways to manipulate others to bend to his will was. He'd never been in a physical fight, nor had he ever actually shot someone. His rise in the CIA was partly due to his father's unique way of collecting on favors he was owed, but it was mostly in part due to his success

after recruiting Treble 'XR13' Frazier. It was in the FBI that Gerald met Treble Frazier.

Then, the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover did not like anyone who interfered with his FBI, as he put it. Gerald's father had done just that. As head of FRAC, the Federal Resources Appropriations Committee, the Senator had threatened to cut the FBI fiscal budget in half unless Gerald was promoted to Senior Field Agent. Although Dr. King had just been declared an enemy of the government, Gerald's father had become an enemy of Hoover, which trumped an enemy of the state. That's why with less than a week's notice and absolutely no field experience, thirty-eight years ago, back in '67, Gerald's first assignment as a Senior Field Agent was to appropriate a sniper and take out Dr. King before he publicly took a stand on the Vietnam War at the huge multi ethnic, interdenominational Riverside Church in Upper Manhattan. Hoover often equivocated his success to others failures, and Gerald's monumental impending failure would force Hoover's hand to rescind Gerald's promotion.

The day had been sunny and cloudless. It was a mild sixty-degrees on this New York, early Spring April day. The wind and visual conditions were almost perfect, Gerald thought as he watched people from all races, creeds, and colors file into the church. The people were dressed in their finest clothes. It was as if they were expecting royalty.

Although Gerald was on the eighth floor of an abandoned building, one city block away from the church, he had a great view of the front entrance where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was due to enter once he arrived. Hoover's orders had been to make sure King never made it into the church.

The sniper Gerald appropriated was said to be one of the best. Gerald was somewhat nervous being that this was his

first time being a spotter on a real hit. He'd only been a spotter in training exercises at the academy. He was actually more nervous at failing his father than failing to manage a kill shot. The high-powered spotter's one-eyed scope and the cool clear day helped to alleviate some of the young agent's trepidation.

A bright light momentarily blinded Gerald when Dr. King's entourage pulled in front of the colossal interdenominational church. It was the light of another spotter's scope. There was another sniper. Gerald could have had his guy take out the sniper but he figured the other sniper was a friendly sent by Hoover to make sure there were no screw-ups. If everything went as planned, Gerald knew that if he got King then he would be the future king of the FBI. Hoover was too eccentric and even more controlling than his father.

After measuring the breeze Gerald gave the sniper the coordinates. King stepped out of the vehicle. Gerald gave the order. A muffled pop went off after the sniper squeezed the trigger.

Gerald and his sniper were at a loss for words. Their mouths dropped open. If they hadn't seen it for themselves they wouldn't have believed it. Shooting like this was unheard of. It was almost impossible to purposely do what they had just witnessed. Two bullets colliding in mid air, a hundred yards away from Dr. King.

Gerald immediately saw this as an opportunity instead of a failure. Gerald promised the sniper fifty thousand dollars, the same amount the government was giving the hired killer after King was assassinated. In return, the sniper would collect the shell casings from the street below and blame his failure on a rifle malfunction. Gerald trained his high-powered scope on where the other sniper fired the shot. Soon, he spotted a young, tall, medium built dark skinned professionally dressed black male leaving the Chemical Bank building on the opposite end of the church with a suitcase just large enough to carry a broken down sniper's rifle. The man moved with absolutely no

urgency. This gave Gerald time to get in position to follow him. Gerald did just that, all the way from New York City to Ebenezer Baptist Church on Auburn Avenue in downtown Atlanta, Georgia.

Gerald had always followed orders and had never strayed. But, this time was different. He just couldn't bear to face his father in light of his recent failure. He could care less about Hoover and the Bureau. Now was his chance to redeem himself and he wouldn't let protocol stand in the way.

On that first day of the surveillance, Gerald saw Treble shaking hands with an older distinguished looking black gentleman wearing a white clergy collar outside of Dr. King's home church. Gerald immediately knew that the pastor was a man of means. Even affluent Blacks didn't drive convertible Mercedes Benz's in the 60's. After running the plates on the pastor's year-old 220E Mercedes, he found out that Dr. John Boyce was a famed archaeologist who specialized in Sub-Saharan artifacts and African religions.

Over the next week, Treble was seen coming to the museum like estate home of Dr. John Boyce. After a week of discovering nothing about Treble Frazier, Gerald decided to move in and arrest him.

Since the Bureau had not sanctioned the arrest, Gerald had to use the basement in a foreclosed metro Atlanta home for the interrogation.

Gerald had confirmed that Treble was a former Army Ranger, one of the first African-Americans to be accepted into the rigorous military unit. He couldn't believe that racism prevented the government from recruiting him as a federal agent. Treble Frazier's skill set scores were the highest ever recorded. Marksmanship, archery, hand to hand combat, strategic planning, no one could come close to his skill set. After studying Treble's dossier, Gerald was even more in awe of the man he saw split a bullet from over three hundred yards away.

Even under interrogation, torture, and the threat of death, Treble hadn't acted like a man taking his last few breaths. Calm and stoic, Treble fluidly and articulately answered all of Gerald's questions – some even honestly. Afraid of killing the man that he intended on recruiting, Gerald ended the weeklong interrogation and torture. As long as Gerald could convince Treble to work for and with him, then how he knew about the King assassination plot was irrelevant and he told Treble as much and agreed to cover it up as long as Treble acquiesced and accepted Gerald's offer to join him once he obtained a position in the CIA.

After botching the hit on King, and going AWOL the week after, Gerald knew he would have too much of a hard way to go at the Bureau with Hoover at the helm. The CIA was going through a restructuring phase because of the way the agency had mishandled the situation on the Indochina peninsula – the situation that had led to the Vietnam War. Hoover would see it as the ultimate revenge for the Senator's intervention on Gerald's behalf. Gerald just had to make it seem like it was Hoover's idea to have him transferred to the F.B.I.'s troubled stepbrother agency. Once there, he would use his father's resources and Treble to help turn the agency around.

Orphaned at seven in 1955, Treble had been raised on a farm in Indianapolis, Indiana by a distant relative, a widow named Hattie Mae Frazier. Gerald learned that Treble joined the Army straight out of high school. Hattie Mae was a church-going woman. Her and Treble had very few friends. It was just the two of them living on a forty-acre farm, raising livestock and vegetables. So what was the connection between a Midwestern farm boy and a world-renowned archaeologist and popular theologian?

TODAY: November 21, 2005

It's been almost four decades since he first saw Dr. Boyce with XR13 and he still didn't see the connection, but time revealed all, he thought.

Gerald and the agency had known about the bomb shelter and the underground tunnel a couple weeks after XR13's house exploded. It had taken almost two years before probate issues were resolved before the land was put back on the market. To the best of the agency's knowledge, no one knew about the elaborate bomb shelter and the quarter mile tunnel that led to a public sewer. As instructed, the city had informed the FBI, who had in turn informed the CIA when an offer came in on the land.

The land had only been listed a few hours when the Focus Holdings offer came over the fax. It was a full price offer at two-hundred and fifty thousand, a hundred thousand more than the land was worth. Gerald had known that if someone offered anywhere near the asking price that they were probably linked to XR13.

Upon further investigation and a lot of shell-company digging, Gerald found what he was searching for. Greenway Financial owned Focus Holdings, the name on the offer. Greenway Financial was owned by Quality Essential Imports. Beatrice Foods owned Quality Essential Imports, and TLC owned Beatrice Foods and TLC was owned by the Reginald Lewis Foundation, and the Chair and CEO of the Reginald Lewis Foundation was Dr. John Boyce.

"Low and behold, the winner or shall I say the loser is the esteemed Reverend Dr. John Boyce," the director said, spinning around in his seat.

"Sir, are you all right?" Gerald's secretary, asked as she cracked the office door.

He looked up from his computer with a mile-wide smile. "I'm fine, Judy. I am supercalifragilisticsepialidocious fine."

"Ooookay then." She smiled. "I will just close your door and leave you to spinning around in your red chair."

Gerald thought back to something his dad used to say. *Junior, sometimes it's better to be lucky than good.* It wasn't all luck, he surmised. He had followed Treble back in '67. He was the only one that knew that a connection between Treble and Dr. Boyce existed. Despite not being able to explain away the DNA lab results that confirmed XR13's demise, the director never truly believed that XR13 was dead. Covering up his own death would be child's play to someone as accomplished as XR13. And now, Gerald surmised, all he had to do was send a team in to sit on Dr. Boyce. He wouldn't risk planting bugs. If XR13 were still alive, he'd detect the bugs or he could have taught Dr. Boyce how to. No, he'd wait. He'd waited almost forty years to interrogate the retired archaeologist and church leader, a little while longer wouldn't hurt.

KUMI

Thanksgiving, 2005
Lithonia, Georgia

“Miracle?” Sunny called out.

After thirteen years, Edmond Dantes was finally escaping from prison. Raynelle had been in prison the same amount of time as Edmond Dantes. I wonder what he was doing? Did they serve turkey to inmates on Thanksgiving? Heck, why should I even care? He raped Momma. But, what if Auntie Assata was right? What if Raynelle didn't touch Momma at all? What if he was innocent like Edmond Dantes?

“Miracle? I know you hear me calling you.”

Dang. Miracle marked her page before putting her book “The Count of Monte Cristo” down beside her on the bed. “Why can't she just leave me alone?” Miracle muttered. *I hate being around her and any of her boyfriends, especially this new one. The way he stares at me gives me the heebie geebies. Her whole body shook thinking about the man. And why did her boyfriends have to be so young?*

“Miracle!”

“Huh?”

“Don’t huh me. Come see what I want, girl?”

“Coming.” Miracle rolled her eyes as she got up from her four-poster queen size bed, slipped on some jeans over her gym shorts before pulling the Florida A&M hoodie over her head. After slipping on her all white Jordan’s, she put a rubberband around her dreads and headed downstairs.

“Stop, boy!” Sunny said as she playfully stuck her behind out, pushing the young man away. “My baby will be down here any minute.”

“Your baby is down here now, momma,” Miracle said, hoping her mother would be embarrassed by her sudden entry.

Sunny turned around. “Miracle Joy Brown.”

Oh Lord, what did I do now?

“I told you about sneaking up on folks.”

Miracle shook her head in disgust, as she eyeballed the man wearing a wife beater and some beige Dickies that were way too big for his skinny behind. *No way momma woulda’ even gave this wanna be young thug the time of day if she was in her right mind.*

“Stop staring at the man, Miracle.” Sunny looked at her boyfriend, as he stared at the contents inside of the sub zero refrigerator. “Excuse us a minute, Rodney.”

“Handle your business, sweet pea,” the man said, taking out a Heineken.

“Come with me, young lady,” Sunny said as she ushered Miracle into the first floor guest bedroom.

After closing the door Sunny began, “Mira, you are thirteen. How many times do I have to tell you, that you are a young lady? And a young lady carries herself with respect and doesn’t go anywhere looking like anything but a young lady.”

“I ain’t going nowhere.”

“I am not going anywhere,” Sunny corrected.

“I am not going anywhere, mother.”

Sunny pointed a finger in her daughters face. “Don’t get smart, Mira.”

“I thought that was the whole point.”

“What are you talking about girl?”

“Getting smart. Isn’t that why you corrected my English, so I can get smart?”

“You lucky we got company.”

“Lucky that we *have* company, mom.”

“You must think I’m something to play with.” Sunny raised her arm in the air, “So help me God, girl, I will –”

“Knock me into next week?”

“What’s wrong with you, girl? Did you come on your cycle early?”

“No, mom. I’m tired of pretending like I’m your little angel. I like wearing jeans, sneakers and big T-shirts. I like hanging out at the Pointe with Yum-Yum. I ain’t never played, I mean, I have never played with dolls and girls are too giggly and stupid. You should be glad I’m not like what’s-his-name out there.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“At least I wear my pants above my behind. I wish you would apply your how-to-be-a-young-lady-rules to yourself.”

Pop! Sunny slapped Miracle.

“First, young lady,” Sunny waved a finger in Miracle’s face, “you will do as I say, not as I do. And second, don’t nobody care what you like to wear and what you like to do. I am the mother and you are the child. I am not raising you to be no bulldyker, nor am I raising you to be a thug. I moved you away from the Pointe into a nice house and a respectable neighborhood to get you away from all that madness.” Sunny pointed at the bedroom door. “Now take your behind back up them stairs, do something with that mop on your head and put on some ladylike clothes. As long as I pay the damn bills around here, you will do as I say.”

“OMG. Are you even hearing yourself?”

“They’re my words, aren’t they?” Sunny crossed her arms.

“Mom, you pay the bills around here because I make the money, been making it ever since Auntie went to jail two years ago. It’s you and me at the dice games, but I’m the one the dice listen to. This house, your car, our Thanksgiving dinner, even that boy out there,” Miracle pointed in the direction of the kitchen, “my work paid for all of ...”

Pop! Sunny slapped Miracle with much more ferocity than last time.

This only made Miracle angrier. This was her first time really standing up to Sunny. She held a palm to her stinging cheek. “You talk about me dressing like a boy, you insinuate that I’m gay but you messing around with these young boys that are closer to my age than yours. You got me out here in back alleys and pool halls, controlling the dice in games all around town. How ladylike is that, mom?”

Sunny stabbed the air in front of Miracle.

“You don’t like the way I run things, then you know where the door is,” Sunny said.

Miracle turned and ran out of the room and up the stairs into her room. A few minutes later, Miracle came down the stairs with hat, coat, gloves, and her school backpack strapped around her shoulders.

Sunny had her hands on her hips, blocking Miracle’s path.

“Where do you think you’re going, young lady?”

Miracle turned and ran to the back door. “I don’t know, but anywhere is better than here,” she said before waking out and slamming the back door.

It was Thanksgiving and the city bus wasn’t running. It was cold, but Miracle was so heated she could barely feel the chill. *None of this woulda’ happened if Auntie Assata was here. I knew momma wasn’t in her right mind, but I couldn’t continue*

watching as she killed herself with that crack. That's the only reason she even let me help her work dice games all around the city. It seemed like soon as Auntie got locked up, momma started to unravel. I tried to put momma back together several times, but there's only so much I can do.

After walking for about ten minutes, Miracle wished that her mother had come looking for her. She took out her iPhone. Not even a phone call. "She cares more about them drugs and that boy than she does about me," Miracle mumbled.

She continued staring at the iPhone screen, willing it to ring. When it didn't, she turned onto Evans Mill Road and continued down the main street. She hadn't even given any thought to where she would go. She was too far away from the Pointe to walk. She didn't have cab fare and the 86 bus didn't run on Thanksgiving.

Her thoughts turned to her best friend. Yum-Yum was probably enjoying his Thanksgiving dinner with his mom and two sisters. *No need to ruin his day*, Miracle thought. One thing about Yum-Yum, he was always cracking jokes and making fun of people, but he never made fun of or judged Miracle. Never. *Hmm, I bet if I my daddy knew who or where I was, I bet he would love me no matter what I wore and no matter what my hair looked like. I bet Momma wasn't even raped. She probably did it with somebody that didn't have any earning potential. That's what she called men that she thought was worth dating.*

The Spinners began singing, *It takes a fool to learn, yes sir, that love don't love nobody*. It was her ringtone. Miracle pressed the Send button.

"What it do, Boo-Boo?"

"Dang, it's only you, Yum-Yum." Miracle sighed.

"Don't sound so happy to hear from me on this day that we commemorate the mass murder of the real O.G. 's of this stolen land."

"OMG, Yum-Yum, you doin' too much."

“I ain’t doin’ enough. Besides, didn’t I ask you to stop calling me Yum-Yum?”

“I ain’t about to call you no Early X.”

“Okay, forget Early X. I will give you the distinct honor of calling me Big Daddy Jook ‘Em Good or if you prefer, Big Daddy Jook ‘Em Long Time.”

“Boy, I ain’t calling you no dang-on Big Daddy nothin’. Yo’ momma named you Early, and I’m gon’ call you Yum-Yum, like I always have.”

“Technically, my mother named me Early, because she say I came a week early. Either people make my name two words and call me Earl Lee or they call me Yum-Yum. Either way, both have to go. We teenagers and I’m getting too old to be going upside people’s heads and getting my head busted over my name.”

“Seriously, Yum-Yum, what you want to be called?”

“Hmmm... How about Hannibal?”

“As in ‘Silence of the Lambs’,” Miracle asked.

“Nah, dummy, Hannibal as in Hannibal of Carthage.”

“Who’s he?” she asked.

“He was only the greatest warrior that ever lived. He kicked butt from Spain to Rome, and he made white people take baths. Before him they just walked around musty, dusty, and funkified,” Yum-Yum said with authority. “And guess what else?”

“What?” she asked.

“He was a black man, blacker than you, Mira.”

“If he’s all that, why haven’t I ever heard of him?”

“Because white folks scared to teach the truth.”

“What they scared of? They own everything,” Miracle said.

“They know that if we knew who we were and what we’ve accomplished throughout history we’d take over corporate America just like we’ve taken over professional

sports and we'd whip they ass every day until they realized how messed up they done did everybody on the planet."

"Where you been getting all this black stuff from, Yum-Yum?"

"Call me, Hannibal!" he shouted in the phone.

"Huh?"

"Remember, the church I told you about?"

"The one my Auntie used to go to?" Miracle asked.

"Yeah. First Afrikan," he said. "Momma joined and she made me go a few weeks ago."

"What that got ta' do with your new found blackness?"

"That's what I'm trying to tell you. First Afrikan teaches us our history in the bible and outside of the bible. You oughta' come check out Teen Black Study next Wednesday."

"You mean Bible study?"

"Nah, I meant Teen Black Study. The bible is full of stories about people who look like me and you, so we call it Teen Black Study on Wednesday."

"I can't think that far ahead, Yum-Yum. I don't even know where I'm going to sleep tonight."

"You and Sunny got into it again?"

"Yep, this time was different though. She clowned on me in front of the current flavor of the month."

"It ain't her, Mira. You know what crack do to folks."

"I know, that's' the only reason I stayed this long," Miracle said. "I'm so confused. I swear I am. I mean, I'm worried about momma, but I can't stay there no more. I don't know what to do?"

"Where you at right now?"

"The Citgo on Evans Mill across the street from the Waffle House."

"You got any money on you?" he asked.

"I got a couple dollars."

"Okay, go on over to the Waffle House, I'm on my way."

“How you gon’ get here and why did you ask if I had money?”

“Because, I might be a minute and if you don’t order something, they might put you out.”

“How you gon’ come get me?”

“You worried about the wrong thing, shawty. I ain’t about to leave my best homie in the wind.”

She was sitting in the back booth by the doors leading to the restroom sipping on her second cup of hot cocoa.

“Can I get you anything else, darlin’?” the three-toothed, leather-faced Waffle House waitress asked.

“No, thank you. I’m okay, just waiting for my dad to pull up.”

I had no idea why I’d said that. But, then again, maybe I was waiting for my dad to pull up. Maybe I had always been waiting for him. He might be able to help me understand how I could move small things around by only imagining them moving to where my mind said. I bet he could explain the boy in my dreams. I bet he had the same gifts I did.

Miracle pulled out her wallet, this time she retrieved a piece of paper.

**Raynelle James Tolliver. Inmate # 027841632.
Hwy. 36 West PO Box 3877
Jackson, GA. 30233**

KUMI NA MOJA

Thanksgiving, 2005
Sahara Dessert, North Africa

While the larger part of American society was feasting or preparing to feast on Thanksgiving turkey and other fixings, Zion Uhuru Frazier was in the middle of a summer sandstorm in the North African Sahara Desert. While being pelted with a million granules of sand in the one hundred and twenty degree heat, Zion reflected back to a couple years ago, when Baba took him back to the late sixteenth century. It was one thing to read history, but to actually watch how Thanksgiving came about was horrifying. His spirit cried for the indigenous peoples, the Europeans renamed Mexicans, and Indians – men, women, and children, shot down, stabbed, and bludgeoned to death like rabid dogs, indigenous men's heads impaled on their own spears and displayed throughout the murdering Anglo town during the elaborate Thanksgiving feasts held after each massacre.

Zion witnessed first hand the evil that men were capable of and he still had a hard time believing that human beings were capable of such savagery against their fellow man.

And what was even more unbelievable was people in America had turned the mass slaughter of human beings into a holy day, and worse, the ones that knew the history made excuses why they still celebrated the occasion on the very day the descendants of the murderers ascribed. It was like celebrating the mass murder of Jews during the Holocaust, or choosing a day to celebrate the beginning of Chattel slavery. But now, Zion had more pressing matters to attend to than to keep reflecting on why people made excuses for the backward things they did.

Although the sandstorm had just ended, Zion still couldn't see two feet in front of him. No worries, he'd been taught to rely on his mind's eye as Baba had called it. His mind's eye was a combination of using the other six senses to make up for the sense that was lacking.

He closed his eyes and began a slow, barely audible hum. He used his mind to block out the sun's intense one hundred nineteen degree sweltering heat, the sand swirling in the air, and the distant hawking sound of hungry vultures circling, waiting – waiting for the unlucky trespasser that dared cross the path of one of the Sahara's many hungry and dangerous animals – waiting for whatever spoils the victor left behind.

For thirty-four days, Zion had walked across the burning hot Sahara desert sands, stopping only for nourishment, to relieve himself, sleep, and to pray. Spending forty days and nights alone in the Sahara was the second part of the ancient priesthood initiation process. Over the last three years, he had learned to unlock doors with his mind that he had no idea existed. Discipline had proven to be the most difficult virtue to conquer. The situation he was currently in called for the strictest of discipline. One wrong move and his earthly existence would be over.

Zion closed his eyes and raised both arms to the sky. He willed the fear he felt away as he walked toward the slight

vibration he felt in his toes. He felt the sand stir in a spiral direction only a few feet away from him. As he moved closer he heard another heart beat, he listened as it sped up. Zion was on alert as he realized the animal he was stalking knew of his presence. Visibility was still zero, but neither Zion nor the rattlesnake that waited rarely used their eyesight to help them ensnare their prey.

Zion was less than three steps away from the coiled serpent. Without preamble, the snake lunged its five-foot long body through the sandy air. Its' mouth was open wide, its' venom dripping, fangs only inches from Zion's throat when he bent over backward and grabbed the snake one-inch too low.

The snake dug its fangs into Zion's hand, between his thumb and index finger. He fought the urge to drop the snake and scream, knowing that if he did, his meal would get away and he would be forced to go another day without food. He called upon the strength of his father and the strength of his mighty ancestors to give him the mite to strangle the life force from the squirming serpent.

A warm sensation coarsed down Zion's arm as the snake went limp. The sensation did not come from the snake's blood that ran the length of his arm; it was the life force draining from Zion. It was a culmination of the sun's intense heat, and Zion's thirst and hunger that caused the venom to take affect much quicker then it would have on a strong healthy teenage boy.

As Zion dropped to his knees, snake still in hand, he recalled something that Baba had said repeatedly, "Six is your number. After six, there is either a beginning or an ending."

Fighting for the life force he felt draining from his own body, he realized that the snake he held in his hand was the seventh snake. He'd killed and had eaten six rattlesnakes over the last five weeks and had never gotten bitten. And now the seventh would be the end of him in this stage of life unless he fought. He could have reached in his pouch, pulled out the only

weapon he was allowed, a pearl handled six-inch hunting knife. The way his body was quickly weakening, he knew that it was too late to use the titanium blade to open up the wound. At this point, trying to suck the poison out would be futile; as the poison was already slithering through his system. His feet and hands were growing numb. He had just enough strength to get to a praying position or so he thought, before falling over in the sand. With his face lying in the sand, he prayed.

“Mother of my father, Mother of my ancestors, Mother of Shango and all the gods that serve you, make this body whole, this vessel you have placed my spirit in, fortify it to withstand the poison that coarses through it’s veins, as you have fortified my heart, my spirit, my soul. We have come so far, Lord. I have been your servant and have listened to you as you led me through Kenyan rainforests, where you taught me to conquer the snake, my greatest fear. After overcoming my fear of the serpent you caste me into a den of hungry lions and allowed me to emerge without a scratch, but as a valued friend to the king of beasts. I listened as you taught me humility in the Kenyan jungles. You gave me the choice to starve or share the carcass of a rhinoceros with a pack of hyenas. I listened as you taught me the power of faith when you left me with the decision to swim across the violent crocodile infested waters of Lake Victoria. Although I couldn’t swim, it was my faith and love for you that pushed me off that cliff. Just like it was my faith that carried me across the turbulent waters.

“Now as I am six days from completing the initiation into the ancient priesthood, I call on you once again. Save this body that I have grown comfortable in.”

“Come!” a voice said.

Zion tried to open his eyes, but he was too weak.

“Come!”

His eyes were closed but he could see his surroundings just as if his eyes were wide open. Better as a matter of fact. He saw straight through the cloud of sand that surrounded him.

“Come!” the voice called out.

Zion tried to rise but his body wouldn't respond.

A foot the size of a cruise ship appeared. Zions looked up to see two burnt brass bronzed legs the size of Redwood California Sequoia trees. His loincloth had to be the size of mega church revival tent. The tree sized double-headed axe he held in one hand gave his identity away. Zion knew who the god was before his eyes made it up to the tribal war mask covering his face.

“Shango,” Zion heard himself say.

“Come!” A huge hand reached out.

With ease, Zion rose up and climbed on top of the hand.

While Shango's hand and arm rose, Zion looked down at his dying body and then back up at himself to make sure he was seeing what he thought he was.

The moon merged with the sun. Bolts of lightning streaked through the dark sky.

Zion stood atop the world in Shango's hand. Rain poured down washing over the young man as he looked into Shango's beaded sun mask.

“Son of my sons, light from the light I brought forth, flame of the fire that I lit, your story has been written in the blood of our ancestors, since the day that evil came into being. Zion, you are the sun, the light of mankind. This time you will not die for the sins of man, you will kill death and rid the world of sin or sin will destroy mankind. Sun, you have to do what I could not.”

Zion was listening but he couldn't help but hope that Shango saved his body before his heart stopped.

“I was given the task of ridding this world of evil several thousand years ago,” the god of storms continued, “My failure to do so caused the Supreme One to send several messengers to mankind. Vanity and pride were my downfall. I was the envy of man and woman. I had three wives. My first wife, Oba was the most beautiful woman in the kingdom. Out

of envy, my wife Oshun fooled Oba into maiming herself in the name of love. At the time, I didn't have a clue to what was going on in my own household. Over time I began noticing the gele that Oba started wearing over her ears.

"My deceitful wife, Oshun had the patience of Job. It was months after my Oba maimed herself before Oshun came to me and explained that she was more beautiful and pure than Oba. Of course, I came to Oba's defense. I called Oshun a liar. And when she told me that Oba had cut off her ear, I burst into laughter. 'My wife was perfect and would never do something so misguided I had said'.

"Later that evening over dinner, I asked Oba to remove the gele. My heart dropped when I saw that Oshun had been right. I no longer had the perfect mate. I was incensed. I looked down into my food, and there was her ear. I was so disgusted that I threw Oba out and banished her from the kingdom. I didn't give her a chance to speak. A while after being banished, Oba gave up on me. I was her everything and I didn't give her an opportunity to explain. I treated her like an object instead of my queen."

The tears that cascaded down his face dropped to the sandy desert and formed a lake.

"I am telling you this, young Zion, because you have to do what I wasn't strong enough to do. You will need the love of the last descendant of Oba to stand any chance at defeating Evil. You and her must become one in order for your powers to unite. Together, yours and her power will have the ability to re-light the world and destroy evil.

"Who is she, this last descendant of Oba? How do I find her?"

"She's not lost, sun."

"What do I say to her?"

"What's more important is what you will do to earn her love." Shango smiled. "When she calls, go to her."

Shango disappeared and like a feather, Zion floated back down into the body that the Lord had gave him.

His eyes opened. The swelling in his right hand was gone. So were the two puncture wounds that the snake's fangs had made. Zion still had a vice-like grip around his next meal. The sun had returned and so had the vultures above. He placed the snake down on the sand beside him. He couldn't resist the desert lake that Shango's tears had just made.

He cupped his hands together and was about to drink when the lake began to stir into a whirlpool. Zion closed his eyes and concentrated on calming the water, instead, Dr. Boyce's image rose from the lake along with other images – images of men that were after the famed archaeologist and spiritualist.

Suddenly, the water rose and transformed the watery images into a group of three letter acronyms NSA CIA FBI.

Zion's eyes popped open. "Uncle John!"

KUMI NA MBILI

October 20, 2007

TWO YEARS LATER: New York, New York

FBI director, J. Edgar Hoover ran a government sanctioned silencing program from 1965 to 1971. The program was established to eliminate anyone that was deemed a threat to the American government's domestic and foreign policies. This program's code name was Cointelpro, short for the counterintelligence protection program. The program's success was due to J. Edgar Hoover. Ultimately, so was its downfall.

Over time, Hoover became drunk with power as he used Cointelpro as his own hit squad, ruining lives and even killing those he deemed a threat to national security. Having JFK assassinated was what began as Cointelpro's and Hoover's downfall – a downfall that experienced some high points; such as successfully dividing the Black Muslims and orchestrating the assassination of Malcolm X. He was a hero in the eyes of his bosses and peers after pulling off his greatest coup. Bernard Schwartz had called it the grand finale, Hoover's coup de grace.

Hoover could do no wrong after successfully having Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. shot at a Memphis hotel, at least that was until he had Bobby Kennedy killed a couple months later. That is when the proverbial cookie began to crumble.

With all the others except for JFK, Hoover had followed Cointelpro protocol – protocol established by then, the most powerful men in the world, Trilateral Commission leaders, Rockefeller, Carnegie, Schwartz, and Swift. The protocol was simple – gather and manipulate information on the target, assassinate the target’s character through the media with created and manipulated realistic information, and then silence the target for good.

Despite the public’s outrage and near catastrophic disaster, Hoover almost caused by circumventing the first two steps before taking out JFK, he did the exact same thing five years later with RFK. Schwartz had then passed the death sentence on Cointelpro. But before he allowed due process to take its course, records and recordings had to be altered and destroyed – records indicating any involvement by the architects of Cointelpro. It wasn’t until three years after the RFK assassination fiasco that the Senate dismantled Cointelpro.

Schwartz had always thought it was Hoover who had leaked the name of the Trilateral Commission. Whether it was Hoover or not, the Trilateral Commission went public in 1973. The Commission members all played a part in creating fantastic conspiracy stories for the media to cover up their plans and who they really were. Over fifty conspiracy theory stories were created – stories that put the Trilateral Commission at the head or in the middle of scandal and world domination plots. Ironically, a third of the stories had some truth to them, but at the time the Trilateral Commission went public the American people were too consumed with the White House and the Watergate scandal to be concerned with far-fetched One World Government conspiracy stories.

At seventy-seven, Bernard Schwartz was the last surviving founding member of the Trilateral Commission. His body was failing him, but his mind was as sharp as it was fifty years ago when Senator McCarthy proposed the One World Order concept to him.

Both men had different ideas on how to implement a program dedicated to creating a One World Government controlled by a handful of European and Euro-American men. Not being able to come to a compromise, Schwartz had the outspoken Senator from Wisconsin assassinated. The death certificate read, '*natural causes*'. Although Senator McCarthy was an alcoholic, there was nothing natural about consuming a gallon of 100 proof whiskey in five minutes. Before he decided to have the Senator killed, Schwartz had considered planting stories in his fifty-two national and international newspaper publications, but he didn't want to risk the chance of McCarthy taking the idea to anyone else.

Now, fifty years after the covered-up McCarthy assassination, Bernard Aryeh Schwartz's own mortality lay in the balance of the seven men that sat in the Trilateral Commission's underground headquarters, fifty feet below Schwartz's New York five star Waldorf Astoria hotel.

Shwartz used his cane to stand. The World's most powerful men that sat in front of him didn't dare meet his ocean blue-eyed stare. They couldn't.

"I made you seven men rich beyond any fantasy or dream you ever had." Schwartz walked around his desk. He stood in front of them, his platinum handled cane dangling at his side.

Media mogul Rupert Cain decided to take the lead. "Bernie, we all know and are in your debt for all the money and power you've helped us acquire over the years."

"Helped you acquire? I virtually delivered Iraq's oil reserves to the Commission. Half, if not all of you, doubted me, when I laid out the plan to take out the towers in 2001. As I told

you they would, virtually overnight my news presses turned America's interest away from Bin Laden to Hussein. My news presses invented the stories of WMD's in Iraq."

The chairman briefly turned his attention to Cain. "My news presses and yours, Cain, put the fear of God in the American people. And when the UN forbid us from going into Iraq, I'm the one that said fuck the United Nations."

"We know, Bernie." Connie Greenspan attempted to calm the chairman. "We respect all that you have done."

"Respect?" the chairman spat. "Son, I been playing chess with the government's money since before you were even a thought in your mothers mind. So, don't tell me about respect. But, you can tell me about loyalty."

"Bernie?" Greenspan said in a tone that suggested that he was hurt by the chairman's blanket accusations.

"I'm your superior, address me as such, Mr. Greenspan."

The young man squirmed inside before re-addressing his uncle. "Chairman Schwartz, no one is pushing you out. We just feel that the Commission's ultimate goal would be best served at this time by someone else at the helm."

"Someone younger – someone like you?"

"I'm your nephew, Uncle Bernie. You provided for me after mother passed."

"I'm glad you remembered."

"You've been preparing me for this day since I was five," Greenspan pleaded. "And now that it's come you talk of loyalty and respect, like, like I've betrayed you."

Director Bush leaned forward. "Look, Bernie the housing crisis has blown up in our faces. The people are calling for your head on a platter."

He pointed a liver-spotted finger at his godson, Gerald Bush. "Just because your Uncle GB Sr., stepped down due to health conditions doesn't mean I am ready to step down, and it does not mean you can interrupt me when I am speaking." The

chairman turned his attention back toward the others that sat in front of him. “The people will believe whatever stories I create for the media. The American people are Goyim, cattle waiting to be herded wherever I lead them.” He switched his attention from the men to his nephew. “So, do not tell me what the people are calling for. Besides, we knew the economy would collapse before I changed banking’s home loan restrictions. This nation thrives on greed and greed has caused this crisis, not me, not us.” Bernie waved an arm around the room. “All we are doing with this so-called mortgage crisis is eliminating the middle class. They are proving to have way too much power.”

“Chairman Schwartz,” his nephew addressed him, “the decision has already been made for you.”

Bernie smiled before lifting and waving his cane around the room. “None of you gentlemen have any idea how far my arm reaches. If you knew what I am truly capable of, you would not have made this decision without my input.” His cane-waving stopped at his sister’s only son.”

A loud pop ensued.

Smoke came from the end of Bernie’s Cane.

A tear rose up and fell from his nephew’s eye. “Why?” the thirty-six-year-old man muttered as he crumbled to the hardwood floor.

Before the others realized that the chairman had shot his nephew in the heart, he’d turned the cane on himself, put it in his mouth and used the edge of the desk to pull the trigger.

Pow!

Blood and brain matter splattered onto the world’s most powerful men, and onto the four walls of books that surrounded them.

Gerald rushed over to Greenspan. Before he could administer CPR, Greenspan coughed, then he started breathing.

The day after Bernie’s private funeral, Constance Aryeh Greenspan not only inherited his uncle’s entire empire of banks, news presses and media outlets, but he also unofficially

inherited the role as Trilateral Commission Chairman, which now made him the single most powerful man in the world.

The Trilateral Commission created an elaborate cover story to explain the bullet that passed through Greenspan's chest and back – a story that made Greenspan an instant American hero. The story went viral and a week after the funeral, Director Bush, Greenspan, and the nation's President were a mile in the air on Air Force One.

"Connie," the president began, "your recovery is nothing short of remarkable. I don't know anyone that has ever survived after being shot in the chest with a rifle at close range," the President said.

"I don't remember much of the incident myself Mr. President. Last thing I can recall was a black bag being thrown over my head and being lifted into a vehicle. I don't know if they knew that I could understand Arabic. When I heard them say in Arabic that my beheading would be broadcast over the web, I knew I had nothing to lose and that the element of surprise was on my side. God spoke to me and I responded with fists. Teeth, legs, everything I had," he lied.

"And you managed to kill four Al-Qaeda operatives inside a nineteen foot U-Haul truck." The president turned his attention to the director. "Any Intel on the U-Haul's driver?"

The director shook his head. "Not yet, Mr. President, but we have every available man on it."

"Goes to show, you can come out on top bringing a pocket knife to a gun fight." The President leaned forward. "Mr. Chairman, I asked you here, because of John McNeil."

"The Republican party's candidate for your job, sir?" Greenspan asked.

"Yes." The president nodded. "We're in trouble. We don't think the longtime Arizona Senator can win against the Junior Senator out of Illinois."

“He’s black,” Gerald interjected. “No way, America will elect him. He’s inexperienced, he has Islamic family ties, and he’s... black.”

The nation’s forty-third president held a hand up in a stopping gesture. “Please, Gerald, we are aware of the Junior Senator’s ethnic background?”

The president crossed his legs. “Have you met Michael Metal?”

“The majority Whip in the House?”

The president swallowed the hundred-year-old Brandy before placing the glass in the chair’s cup holder and then responding. “Metal and I agree that you would be a shoo-in, in oh-eight. Now I know we have only days to announce, but we will throw the full backing of the Republican Party behind you.”

“I have no political experience. I wouldn’t know the first thing —”

“You’re a war hero, Connie. And now, you’re the people’s hero. You come from a long line of politicians and world changers. You’re young, but not too young. Next year at thirty-seven, you will be the forty-fourth president of the United States.”

“I’m honored, Mr. President, but with all due respect, I have to decline. I have a huge responsibility as the Trilateral Commission Chair.”

“Trilateral Commission. Son, you can play with your rich friends anytime. What’s more important than running the country?” the president asked.

“Making sure that the country’s financial resources are secure so that the country can run, that’s why I’d like to be appointed as my uncle’s successor as the Chair of the Federal Reserve.”

“I’m already having someone vetted for the Chair position. Besides, I think you’d make a better CEO of this country than you would as Federal Reserve Chair.”

“Excuse me, gentlemen,” the CIA director rose from his seat, “nature calls.”

After the director was out of earshot, Greenspan leaned forward in his chair so the Secret Service agents behind and in front of them couldn't hear. Greenspan looked in the President's eyes. “Once I finish speaking you will get on the phone and stop the vetting process. Once we land, you will formally introduce me as my uncle's successor.”

Moments later when Gerald returned, the President was on the phone ordering that the vetting process be stopped and that a new one for Constance Greenspan be started.

Director Bush took his seat. “What's going on?”

“The president has reconsidered and has offered me the Chair position,” Greenspan said.

“I figured as much,” the director said while looking at the President's animated gestures as he spoke on the government satellite phone. “Looks like he's having a hard time selling you.”

“That's not my or your problem,” Greenspan said. “Speaking of problems, where are we at on the Boyce, investigation?”

The director stammered as he was caught completely off guard. “I, well we've not been able to get anything on him, not yet.”

Greenspan opened a manila file folder and stared at the contents inside. “It says here that you've had the target under investigation for almost two years. In that time you've spent upwards to a million dollars in man-hours and surveillance equipment. Surely a million dollars has netted something to facilitate a reason for us to allocate more taxpayer's money to your investigation”

The director gathered his thoughts. “Well, actually, we've developed intel that suggests that Boyce is working with a network of Christian pastors around the country and...”

“One month,” the chairman interrupted.

“Sir?” the director said.

“You have exactly one month to tie Boyce to terrorist activity, Gerald.”

“How am I supposed to wrap up –?”

“Take the gloves off, man. Remember Cointelpro.”

“What do you know about Cointelpro?” the director asked. “You were in diapers when it was disbanded.”

Greenspan smiled. “My uncle told me all I need to know.” Connie looked at the time on his uncle’s favorite Rolex. “The clock is ticking Gerald, you have one month to nail Boyce, or we might have to sit down and have a conversation about your future.”