

Peter A. LeGault

**AN ULTIMATE
WARNING**

**A Trip at Sea Leading to
Disaster, Death & Life**

**CONTROVERSIAL
EDUCATIONAL
CHALLENGING**



AN ULTIMATE WARNING

Peter A. LeGault



Covers: Peter A. Legault

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Dépôt légal – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2014

ISBN: 978-2-924224-62-5 (2nd edition, 2014)

This book is available in French under the name: AVERTISSEMENT ULTIME

Also available on paperback.

www.editionslpd.com

Acknowledgement

I first need to thank my wife, Mimi, for her patience and support while I travelled, investigated and found facts to support the reality elements of this story. It was even more troublesome for her when I disappeared in my man cave to write and mix fiction with reality. As the first reader of this book, she deserves my appreciation.

I must also express my gratitude to my reviewer Pam and her husband Don.

To my readers

If you never understood why our governments act the way they do, read on.

If proper, conservative and conventional sexuality is your inclination, this story may shock you and open a door to a world of erotic behaviors. Beware...

Peter A. LeGaut

The Controversial Messenger

Chapter 1

Yesterday or Later: Bill, Cynthia, and SeaLove

“You know... you are a lucky man!”

“Lucky, I guess you could say that, but I have to say the more I worked in my life, the luckiest I became.”

“Are you saying you worked more than most? That’s why you’re so lucky?”

“Could be. Could be!”

William Morrison, better known as Captain Bill, stood by his sailboat, smiling and looking at George Martin. Bill had a magnetic presence. He was in his forties, tall, slim, in good shape with dark hair and a touch of gray. His strong and well-tanned arms and legs showed he had been raising sails on a sailboat for a long time. He was the perfect image of a healthy man.

“Well, you know, George, I really would like for you to come with me on this trip. I understand why you cannot but.”

“But I am just not as fortunate as you.”

George was as tall as Captain Bill and somewhat heavier. He was also a small boat captain. They both studied together, getting their six-pack license from the US Coast Guard about five years ago. George turned toward the sailboat.

“What a beauty she is. You’re sure she’s ready for this adventure?”

“She better be,” said Cynthia.

Cynthia Flaherty was to be Captain Bill’s only sailing companion. She planned to be with him for the course of the long

trip around the world. She was a good-looking lady, about 5'7". She was not what could be called a gorgeous female, but there was something about her that made her quite pleasant—nice body, maybe a little roundish, long legs and long arms, well breasted, short brown hair, and a pretty face. Her most stunning parts were the big, round brown eyes, expressing a constant glimmer of confrontation. She was a bit of a tease and liked showing as much of her body as she could. She enjoyed staring at men that were attractive to her. When she caught the eyes of a man looking down her breasts, the little devil in her made her feel wanted. She liked to be desired even if she claimed to be totally faithful to Captain Bill.

"Cynthia, do you think the boat is ready?" asked George.

"She better be! I am going to be on her for quite a long time. I want to make it back!"

"Relax," said Bill. "I know, and you know that SeaLove is ready. Just look at her, waiting there like a glorious stallion!"

"What a beauty," said George.

SeaLove, a 47' sloop, was a graceful and striking vessel. She was built in France a few years ago by the Jeanneau group. A long sporty line showed that she was a fast sailboat. In fact, she was meant to be a racing boat. SeaLove was the fourth sailboat ever owned by Bill. When he bought her, he knew what he wanted. In his mind, a racing vessel was better built than a regular sailboat. Normally faster and more fitted to withstand the assaults of the inclement seas or winds. After sailing her for a while and in order to familiarize himself with the caprices of SeaLove, Bill participated in a few small races. He had to know how far he could push his yacht. He found her to be responsive, agile, fast, and pointing well into the wind. In a good day and with good sail trimming, he could sail her 20 degrees up wind. Going on a reach, she would easily gain speed and catch up with most boats competing against her. She, however, dropped momen-

tum when going down wind. Her 14'7" beam slowed her down a little.

Bill did not enter SeaLove in many races. Competition is not what he wanted out of his new toy. Six months after the original purchase, Bill took SeaLove on dry dock to modify her to his liking. He replaced the pedestal, changed the steering wheel for a smaller one, reinforced the steering system, and added an auto pilot and many navigation instruments. He had a few additional sails made, including a glorious red cruising spinnaker. He improved the bimini, installed a stainless steel arch and davits for the inflatable dinghy. Two solar panels and a wind generator were mounted over the davits. An emergency life raft was placed in the starboard lazarette. The idea was to transform this racing vessel into the most comfortable and best equipped cruising sailboat. Bill added a generator, air-conditioning, refrigeration, ice maker, Force 10 stove, inverter, one additional water tank, a water maker, microwave, sound system, television, DVD player with a multitude of DVDs, and a library with a good choice of books. Cynthia was invited to help with the interior decor. The curtains had somewhat of a girly look, but Bill did not really mind. Bill equipped his navigation table with the most modern instruments. He installed a state-of-the-art sailing computer with all of the charts he would need. The computer was set to interact with the GPS and the large color screen radar. He also purchased two EPIRBS—one to remain on board, the other to be inserted in the security bag that would remain safely attached inside the dinghy. All equipment had spares and spare parts. SeaLove was ready. The only task left was to bring their personal things, necessities, and food on board.

On April 10, the personal supplies needed for the next six months were stored on board. The food and produce that should last for a good two weeks were placed in the provision container, refrigerator, or freezer. They planned to buy more provisions in Marsh Harbor, Bahamas, their second port of call. A few weeks later more necessities would be purchased in Bermuda.

SeaLove was docked at Cocoa Village Marina, Cocoa Florida. Bill had purchased a slip a few years ago from the builders of the marina. Captain Bill was well known and respected by most other boaters and employees of the marina. Before leaving the dock, he filed a cruising plan with Ken, the manager of the marina.

"Well, Ken it's 8:00 a.m., and we are ready to go."

"You have all you need, Bill?"

"Yes, we do. The weather looks good. We should be at sea in a couple of hours, if we can reach State Road 3 Bridge before 8:30 a.m. If we don't, we will only get on the east side of the bridge after 9:00 a.m."

"And then you'll have to cross the Cape Canaveral locks," said George. "I don't think you will be at sea before noon."

"I can't wait to be out of the Canaveral inlet," said Cynthia.

"I want to get these rags off my body."

"You mean these miniature shorts and this skimpy, almost see-through top you have on?" asked George.

"Come on, you two," said Bill, "hug and kiss and let's go, Cynthia!"

"Obey your captain, Cynthia, and bring that body of yours close to me."

So Cynthia did. She gently rolled her body against George, tapped his buttock, looked in the eyes, and said:

"You would like to get me, wouldn't you? Hum... I can feel you. Take that toy to your wife and give her a good time. Don't tell her you're thinking about me when you're doing it to her! Ah! Ah! Ah!"

Cynthia pulled herself away from George as he said:

"Have a safe trip; don't hurry back."

Then George whispered so that only Cynthia could hear:

"I'll get in your pants one of these days."

"Let's go," Bill said to Cynthia. "It's getting late. Hey, Ken, we should be in Turtle Key in about five days. I will call you as soon as we get there. As agreed, I will keep you posted on all our arrivals and departures from our scheduled ports of call."

"Make sure you do, Bill, or else we will have to worry about you."

"Don't worry," said Cynthia. "I will take good care of my captain."

Bill started the Perkin diesel engine, while Cynthia picked up the lines Ken and George had freed from the dock. As she was bending down, she made sure to be in a position that filled the boys' eyes. Her left breast almost got out of the miniature red top. She smiled, stood up, turned away, and carefully walked toward the cockpit. Bill put the engine in reverse. SeaLove slowly made her way out of the slip.

"I don't know why Bill is taking this tramp with him," said Ken.

"Because she is fun and a fairly good sailor, replied George, she likes boats almost as much as she likes teasing men. She will be good company for Bill. She's a good cook and can work down in the galley even when the sea is rough."

The boat was now out of the marina. Bill and Cynthia looked back and waved.

"See you in a couple of years," yelled Bill.

He looked ahead of him to steer SeaLove toward the channel. The depth sounder indicated less than 2 feet of water under the keel. Bill had to pay attention. It would be a shame to get aground at the start of the trip. He turned on the VHF radio and listened to the weather forecast one more time. Meanwhile Cynthia was properly rolling the docking lines and placing them in the starboard lazarette.

Bill decided not to raise the sails. State Road 3 Bridge was only a few miles away. They had to travel on the Indian River to the Barge Canal, pass the drawbridge, and keep going east on the canal toward the Canaveral Lock. SeaLove did not arrive at the bridge by 8:30 a.m. Bill had to wait half an hour before crossing. A few miles later, they arrived at the locks as the gates were opening. Bill methodically steered SeaLove toward the wall while Cynthia handled the ropes like a pro. They left the locks without any unpleasant incident.

By 10:30 a.m., they were well into Cape Canaveral Inlet, moving east at hull speed. Bill asked Cynthia to take the helm while he proceeded on deck to prepare and raise the mainsail. As it went up, the gentle breeze from the southeast began to fill the sail. The vessel gained a little speed. Bill asked Cynthia to ease on the throttle. They would motor sail to the ocean, where Bill may be able to raise the genoa.

"I'm so happy!" said Cynthia. "Imagine, Bill, we won't be coming back up this canal for at least two years. The world belongs to us! Can I get naked, Bill?"

"With the people onshore looking at us and all the boats we are meeting, including the Coast Guards, are you nuts?"

"Just kidding, Captain."

"If you were as good in bed as you are showing these pineapples of yours, I would have more fun!"

"What did you say?"

"You heard me."

"I will make you pay for that remark. Next time we do it, I won't stop until you beg me to stop!"

"That will be the day!"

"Yes, Mr. John Wayne."

Bill was still on deck when they reached the ocean. He looked at the main sail and knew he would lose the ability to sail as soon as they turned southeast to follow the coast of Florida. The plan

was to make Fort Pierce by the end of the afternoon and to anchor there until the next morning.

"I do not like the idea, but we will have to motor sail to Fort Pierce."

"I knew that a long time ago, Captain!"

"Of course, you did!"

"Can I take my top off now?"

Bill looked at her, lifted his shoulders, and ordered, "Set the course at 150, engage the autopilot, and bring the engine to 20 rpm. Then you can do whatever you want. I am going below to get something to drink. Are you thirsty?"

"What about a shot of the famous Cognac you have in the bar. I saw the bottle last night. You thought you could hide it from me, didn't you?"

"No," said Bill. "I am not hiding anything from anyone. You can't have any now, it's way too early!"

"Just kidding!"

"Is the boat on course?" asked Bill.

"Yes, Captain," responded Cynthia while giving the military salute. "What is our estimated time of arrival in Fort Pierce?"

"What does the speed indicator say?"

"6.8 knots."

"With a little luck, the wind should build up and shift a little more to the east. We should be there before 6:00 p.m."

Around three o'clock, Bill grabbed a folding chair from the lazarette and went to the front deck. He sat down and stretched his long legs toward the bow. He glanced at the water running against the bow. He smiled and wished he could turn off the engine and raise the genoa. Not now, the wind was still out of the southeast. The main sail was hardly doing anything except giving the boat some stability. The sea was calm. No white caps in sight. All he could view and feel were the long rolling waves coming from the

east and making SeaLove roll gracefully. He stared at the sixty-foot-tall mast, the shrouds, the stays, the two spreaders and rolled his eyes back toward the bow and the sea. How he loved this boat. So many hours of work, practically total devotion. SeaLove was exactly what he wanted and needed to make this long voyage. Bill could hardly wait to be far out on the ocean and no longer see the coast of Florida. It will take a couple of days. He had to reach Fort Pierce first. The next day, they would arrive in Lake Worth. That's where Bill was planning to refill the fuel and the water tanks. Then the great adventure would start. They would sail east toward Memory Rock and the Bahamas.

"What are you doing, Captain?" said Cynthia. "I'll get a drink for myself and come to sit in the front with you. Is that OK?" Without waiting for an answer, she added, "Do you want something?"

"No, thank you," answered Bill.

He would have preferred for her to remain in the cockpit a little longer. He liked to be alone on the front deck—he and SeaLove, sharing the sea and the peace. Of course he wouldn't want to be alone for the whole trip. During the course of the previous days, he had to deal with people and preparations. Now, at this moment, he would fancy a little solitude.

"What a great day," said Cynthia. "It's so beautiful out there. Too bad we can't turn off the damn motor."

She sat right on the deck, Indian style, facing Bill with a bottle of beer in her hand. She drank a little.

"OK, Captain, can I take my top off now?"

"If you want," said Bill without any emotion or excitement in his voice.

"This is not an answer," said Cynthia. "I want to hear yes or no. You can say yes or no, can't you? You could also be a real gentleman and say, 'Oh, Cynthia, please take your top off. I can't wait to see your beautiful and so sexy breasts.'"

Bill looked at her, a little amused, and said:

"Cynthia, if you want to show your grapefruits, go ahead and do it!"

"I want to hear... yes or no!"

"OK... yes, show... show..."

"That's what I wanted to hear. Now I don't have to do it!"

"Now you don't want to do it?"

"No, replied Cynthia. I don't have to do it."

"You are a strange girl", said Bill half amused and half exasperated. "Very strange!"

"I'm not so strange, Bill", explained Cynthia with a very serious face. "The point is... now I can. I am finally free from this stupid society that tells me, days in and days out, what I can and cannot do. What is wrong with breasts? Are they not a normal part of the human body? Why is it such a big deal? Why are there stupid human laws against my breasts in this damn American culture I am so happy to leave? I'm told what to do at every corner of my life."

"We are a society of laws," said Bill.

"It's a stupid society", replied Cynthia after drinking a little more. "Look at it my way. In the USA, there is a population of about three hundred million people. More than half of this herd is females. We have over three hundred million breasts in this country. Breast, breast, societies almost made a sin out of the word. You can hardly talk about breasts without offending someone. What is wrong with the word? What is wrong with breasts?"

She dropped her top, grabbed her left breast with her right hand while holding her can of beer in the left hand.

"What's wrong with my breasts? Why do you men make them so sinful? Society is weird. I tell you, Bill, weird."

This being said, she put her can of beer between her legs, removed her top totally, and threw it over board.

"Even you, Bill, you can't say breast. You refer to my breast as 'pineapples or grapefruits' and what else?"

"And how do you call my private parts?" asked Bill.

"First of all", said Cynthia, laughing, "Your 'papi' is not so private. It's more like a general who fought too many wars. I call it 'papi' because that's what you do with it the most often."

"You can't say the word penis, but you wonder why I don't call these big balls of meat on your chest 'breast!'"

"Good for you", screamed Cynthia, "good for you, Bill! You said the word... breast."

"You are out of this world!" said Bill, "now totally amused. My first mate is a nut!"

"Bill, think about this situation. A good classy-looking woman goes to a restaurant with some friends. She has a little baby in her arms. During the course of the meal, the baby starts crying because he is hungry."

"So the baby is a boy?" asked Bill, still laughing.

"Yes, he is a boy!" said Cynthia with sarcasm. "That's why he's a cry baby. Now listen. So the baby is hungry. Mother decides to open her blouse and presents a breast to the baby. Normal, is it not? Well, guess what happened?"

"The baby had a better lunch than she did?"

"No, idiot, it was a scandal. She was asked to leave the restaurant and told to never come back again."

"She could have gone to the ladies' room."

"But why, Bill, Why? Is it not normal for a woman to feed her baby is it not what nature intended?"

Bill looked at her for an instant and concluded, "I will admit that we are a strange society. It's OK to submit our children to all kinds of violence on TV or at the movies, and these movies are not 'R' rated. However, if you present a bare breast on the screen, it becomes an 'R' rated movie."

"Now you understand what I am trying to tell you?"

“I do”, said Bill. “I do.”

Chapter 2

Yesterday or Later: First Anchorage

They arrived in Fort Pierce around 6:00 p.m. They anchored on the south side of the inlet, in a little bay close to the Coast Guard station. The tide was slowly coming in. The water was calm and they had no problems whatsoever setting the Danforth anchor.

“Is this a safe anchorage?” Asked Cynthia.

“Yes, I dropped the hook here before. It can get a little uncomfortable when other boats go up and down the inlet. We are here at night. We won’t be too affected. I’m planning to leave early in the morning. Do you want to cook dinner or would you prefer to eat on shore?”

“I don’t want to go ashore. We just got on the boat. I have something planned for dinner. You will like it. Do you want a rum and coke?”

“Yes, I would. While you prepare dinner, I will wipe the deck a little.”

Cynthia did not exaggerate; she prepared quite a substantial meal. After dinner, Bill set up the double hammock between the forestay and the mast. They lay down, side by side, glazing at the stars and both dozed off. A few hours later, they moved to the captain’s cabin and returned to the land of Nod.

Bill got up around 6:00 a.m. He made as little noise as possible. His idea was to pick up anchor and make it back to the ocean while Cynthia was still sleeping. What a surprise it would be for her to get up and find they were back at sea. Using the powerful windlass, the anchor was quickly back on board. The tide was on its way out. He steered SeaLove toward the middle of the inlet, and without starting the engine, he let the boat gently slide toward the sea. From the weather channel on the VHF radio, he learned that there was no storm or rain in the forecast. The day would be a copy of

yesterday—calm sea and light breeze from the southeast. *I guess we're going to have to motor sail again*, thought Bill. For a few minutes, a couple of dolphins were swimming alongside the port side of the boat.

Bill asked:

“Are you guys going where I’m going?”

He kept his eyes on the formation until the dolphins got out of sight. Once he reached the end of the inlet, he started the engine, let it warm up a little, and engaged the transmission.

“That engine purrs like a cat,” he said to himself.

He steered the boat on the right course, set the autopilot, and went on deck to raise the main sail. A few minutes later, Cynthia showed up in the cockpit. She was in her birthday suit.

“How come you did not wake me up, Captain?”

“Well, I figured you needed your beauty sleep! How about you make us some coffee and a good breakfast.”

“Last night didn’t take too much energy out of you, did it?”

“We didn’t do anything. You went to sleep like an old wife. Not even a kiss. What about that coffee?”

“Coming up, Captain,” said Cynthia while leaving the cockpit.

The main sail was up and not doing much for the performance of SeaLove. They probably would have to motor sail all day. Bill grabbed a dry cloth out of the lazarette, added a little polishing oil to it, and went around the boat, gently rubbing the stainless steel and the stanchions. This was one of the chores Bill did not like to do on the boat. The other one was changing the motor oil.

“Coffee is ready,” yelled Cynthia, “still deep in the galley. Come and get it!”

“What kind of service is that? A good first mate should bring the coffee to her captain.”

“Well, the good first mate will serve you as soon as the second mate makes breakfast.”

After the meal and after Cynthia took care of the mess down below, Bill sat at the navigation table to study the present location and make some entries in the log book. He soon made it back to the cockpit, where Cynthia was reading a book, comfortably lying down on the port cushions, still unclothed, well protected from the sun under the bimini.

“It’s going to be a hot one today,” said Bill.

He was looking at her and wondering why he was wearing shorts and a T-shirt.

“How long before we get to Lake Worth Inlet?” asked Cynthia. “I have never been there by sea. In fact, I really never sailed the Atlantic. My sailing life was mostly on Lake Michigan. Later in life, I moved to the Pacific Coast, where we had real waves and wind. Not like here. I get more waves and more action in my bathtub than I can see around this ocean.”

“Just you wait. We will get wind and waves, rain and storms. Let’s enjoy this easy day at sea. We are only about five hours away from Lake Worth. It’s not far. Look out there. There are a few sailboats ahead of us. I’ll bet we can catch them before we reach our destination.”

Bill checked the main sail. Not much he could do to increase the speed. The air was still out of the southeast. The wind indicator showed an apparent wind of 12 knots. Bill reached for the accelerator handle and pushed it a little downward. At 22 rpm, SeaLove began to advance forward a little faster.

“Are you racing, my captain?”

“Not really. It is always good to change the RPM once in a while.”

“Sure, mostly when you see a boat ahead of you.”

She was right, but Bill ignored the remark.

"What are you reading?"

"Oh, something about prostitution. I think prostitution is disgusting."

"Why is it disgusting? It is a service like any other."

"You favor prostitution?" asked Cynthia.

She laid her book down and sat so she could face Bill. He was sitting on the starboard side of the boat, right across the cockpit table.

"I do not object to it," said Bill. "As I said, it is a service like any other type of service."

"You don't object to prostitution?" Cynthia was raising her voice.

"Prostitution is the exploitation of woman by pigs, men like you."

"Did you just call me a pig?"

"If you favor prostitution, you are a pig."

"OK," said Bill. "Let's talk about prostitution in a calm and logical way. You were saying, yesterday, that breasts were a normal part of a woman, of nature, and should not be considered a sinful part of the body."

"What does that have to do with prostitution?" asked Cynthia.

"Nothing and everything. Listen to me. I will give you my theory on the subject and then you can tell me if my view has some value to you."

"Shoot," said Cynthia, rolling her eyes.

"OK! We both agree that the human body, whatever evolution it went through, is a normal part of life and nature?"

"So far, so good!" said Cynthia.

"We also agree that sexuality, be it vegetable or animal, is a normal source of life?"

"What does that have to do with prostitution?"

"Everything, keep listening. In the animal world, the leading and strongest male, the one who normally carries the best genes, chooses the premium female to procreate, and assure the survival of the species, right?"

"Yes, I know that," said Cynthia, showing a little sign of impatience. "That's what horses do. How does it relate to prostitution?"

"I'm getting there. So you brought it down to horses. I'm fine with that. So the supreme stallion in a group of horses chooses his females. It is the law of the strongest. Many other stallions may object and confront him. But as long as he is the strongest, he chooses the females he wants!"

"I already agreed. Can we stay on the subject and talk about prostitution?" asked Cynthia.

"It's coming," replied Bill. "Do you agree that what I just said about the horses is a result of the evolution laws of nature?"

"Yes, but we are not horses!"

"We are animals."

"We are human, not animals."

"Humans are a part of the animal world."

"Do animals practice prostitution?" asked Cynthia in a sarcastic tone.

"May be, in their own way. I can't be sure. Now, all the laws we humans made. All these laws you don't like is what led us to prostitution."

"How do you figure that?" asked Cynthia a little more attentive.

"We made laws to control the sexuality of people. These laws defied the rules of nature and eventually led us to violence, crimes, and rapes."

"Yes, Captain Professor Einstein, how did you arrive to such a conclusion?" asked Cynthia, remaining sarcastic.

"In today's society, the man who has the best place in society, who is the richest or famous, can just about get any female he wants."

"OK, I'll agree with that. It's the same for women. We just use different tools. A beautiful woman can pretty well seduce any man she wants."

"Absolutely true."

Bill had his finger pointing in the air, and his face was claiming victory.

"That's what leads us to prostitution. We agree? The top men or women pretty well get the sexual partners they want? They can express their sexuality whenever they desire. But what about ugly Joes or Josettes?"

"What about them?"

"They are, and they have the problem. They cannot, express their sexual life as they want. But they still have sexual needs and desires."

"Ever heard of masturbation?" asked Cynthia, laughing.

"Sure," replied Bill, "but it gets old and nature intended the act of procreation. Now, let's take this example. A guy, really not favored by nature, with poor physical appearance, still has sexual needs and urges. Do you agree?"

"Someone like you, Captain?"

"I will ignore your remark. Listen, our fellow tries to meet girls. He is most likely to be rejected unless he meets a female of his kind. Now, like any man, or horse, nature wants to him to have sex with the fittest female so that he can create a quality child! Every time he approaches such a female, he gets rejected and often laughed at. Eventually, he gets frustrated. That's when our fellow could become violent and rape someone."

"Like you did to me, my captain?"

"I never raped you. It's the other way around. You sex maniac!"

"Sex maniac! Wait till tonight. I'll show you what a sex maniac is like!"

"Anyway," continued Bill. "This is where prostitution becomes necessary. A person can meet another, express his or her needs, and satisfy the normal sexual urges without hurting anyone. In fact, the

person, who is selling time and a little affection, often needs money to be able to survive in this costly life of ours.”

Pensive, Cynthia looked at Bill and asked: “Yes, but what about the girl who is kidnapped and sold to prostitution. What about her? It happens you know. What about her?”

“That is a problem caused by society. But there’s a solution. Society should start by legalizing and regulating prostitution. Like they do in certain countries. Wherever prostitution is legal, the crime of rape is almost nonexistent. Our society should legalize prostitution and try to make it as clean as possible. The girls or the boys involved with prostitution would have to be trained and licensed. They would have frequent medical exams. They would pay taxes. Prostitution would be treated like any other kinds of business. Only those who want to be involved would be.”

“And how would the government administer prostitution? They can’t do anything, right.”

Bill thought for a second and answered:

“They would do as they did with alcohol after the prohibition. They legalized liquor, controlled the quality, the sales, and collected taxes. It did not put all the bootleggers out of business but almost.”

“Sure, now look at the problem we have. Drunks all over the place.”

“Drunks would be there anyway. We would probably have more.”

“OK,” said Cynthia. “So your scenario is this. Your Joe, as you called him, needs to get laid. He takes a little of his money and goes to a legal and clean prostitution agency. There he can choose a female. He does his thing, goes home, and he is satisfied for a while.”

“That’s it! And the people working in these agencies are there by choice. They earn their living. They pay taxes and are no longer a burden to society.”

“And if your Joe has no money?”

“Well, we did not eliminate all the problems, just most of them. We cannot eliminate all the crimes. People will always steal, rape, and kill.”

“I see your point, Bill. But what about the married people who would visit these places. Your plan would be an encouragement to cheat on the spouse?”

“Someone who wants to or needs to jump the fence will do it. They may go to some bar, pick up a partner, and bring some sickness home. My way, it’s safer. The people wanting a sexual partner would get a clean, healthy professional. It would be as if someone had gone to the dentist.”

“You think women would do that as well?”

“Oh yes, the way things are, if a man is cheating with a woman quite often that woman is cheating someone with that man. Well, we are almost at our destination for today. Let me check a few things on the boat.”

Chapter 3

Yesterday or Later: Aground

After overtaking the two sailing vessels that had attracted Bill's attention, SeaLove was only about one mile northeast of Lake Worth Inlet.

"OK, first mate, time to get off your behind and get SeaLove ready for docking. Please cover yourself!"

"Yes, my captain, which side are you going to dock on? Port or starboard?"

"I won't know until I see where the fuel pumps are in this marina. I never bought fuel here before. Get three fenders and three docking lines ready and place them in the middle of the boat. As soon as I have an answer to your question, I will let you know."

"OK, Captain," said Cynthia with a clumsy salute.

Bill took the helm and disengaged the autopilot. As they turned west into the inlet, Bill searched for a junction, where he had to turn right to get to the marina. He soon found the junction and slowly veered the boat to northwest. He noticed that quite a few boats were anchored west of the little channel. He also noticed the red markers on his right and the black markers on his left. He slowed SeaLove down and steered her between the markers.

"Well, Bill, do you know on what side I should put the fenders yet?"

She was standing on the front part of the deck, slowly putting her shorts on. She was still topless, and if someone on the anchored boats was looking their way, it would be easy to see that Cynthia had nothing on top.

“Put your top on, will you, Cynthia. There could be some cops around here. I don’t want a ticket for indecent exposure of my first mate.”

“See what I told you yesterday. Breasts, breasts, breasts, the sinful things.” As she was yelling these words, Cynthia was holding her breasts and looking at the sky.

Bill could not help but laugh. Suddenly, SeaLove came to a full stop. She was aground. Distracted, Bill never noticed that the boat had drifted west of the channel. He was surprised to be aground. There were boats anchored less than 100 feet west of him. He concluded there had to be a sandbar between the channel and the anchorage.

“What happened, Bill?” asked Cynthia while putting a short blouse over her shoulder.

“We’re aground. That was stupid of me. I’ll get her out.”

Bill engaged the transmission in reverse and gradually increased the RPM. SeaLove did not move back. The boat was equipped with a modified fin keel with a wide bulge at the bottom. Bill decided to shift the transmission back and forth, while steering the boat right and left, to dig some kind of a hole in the mud, under the 5’.5” keel. He succeeded in turning the boat a full 90 degrees to the right. He increased the power and tried to move forward. Nothing doing, SeaLove was well stuck.

“Damn it, said Bill to Cynthia. This is not good! The tide is slowly going out. If we don’t get out soon, we will have to stay here until next high tide.”

“You won’t be too popular, Captain. We are almost blocking the channel.”

“I know. Somehow I’ll get her out!”

Within minutes, a Boat US, sea towboat came along the starboard side of SeaLove.

"Do you want some assistance, Captain?" said a young man from the front of the boat.

"What would you charge me to pull me out?" asked Bill.

"How long is your boat?" asked the young man while looking at Cynthia, who was approaching the cockpit.

"47 feet," replied Cynthia before Bill could say anything. "Isn't she beautiful?"

"You are beautiful," said the young man. He opened the small book he was holding, looked at Bill, and said, "\$750, Captain."

"Did you say \$750? This is ridiculous. I'm not going to give you \$750 to get us out. In fact, I am a member and a good client of Boat US. You should not be charging me anything."

"Do you have your membership card with you? If you bought grounding insurance from Boat US, you may not have to pay anything."

Bill went down to the navigation table and came back with his membership card. He handed it to the young man. After looking at it, the young man said: "Well, there is good and bad news, Captain. When you paid for your membership, you did not pay extra for towing insurance. You get an automatic \$150 insurance with your membership. The bad news, you still have to pay me \$600."

"Get your boat away from me," said Bill with an aggressive tone of voice. "Before I give you \$600, I would stay right here and wait for the next high tide."

"Yes," said Cynthia, "get out of here! And stop looking at me. You are not a member of my fan club. You should pay me to look at my body the way you do."

"As you wish, Captain."

The young man returned to the helm of his towboat. After he was gone, Cynthia asked, "Well, what are we going to do now?"

"I have a plan."

Bill turned off the engine and added: "Help me put the dinghy in the water."

From the back of the boat, Bill rowed the dinghy to the front of SeaLove.

"Cynthia, release the windlass and help me bring the anchor down in the dinghy."

"How do I do that? Are we going to anchor here?"

"No, we are not. To release the anchor, press on the red button on your left."

Bill stood at the back of the dinghy and pulled down the anchor until it was at his feet.

"OK, Cynthia, Good job. Now feed the chain to me as I row ahead."

Bill went forward for about 200 feet and gently dropped the anchor. Once he knew the anchor was grabbing, he pulled hard on the chain to dig the anchor deeper. He rowed the dinghy back to the stern of SeaLove, climbed in the cockpit, and made his way to the bow. He engaged the windlass and rolled the chain in until it was tight.

"Here's what I want you to do," he said calmly. "I will go back to the cockpit and start the engine. I will shift it forward. When I say go. Press on this green button with your foot. Meanwhile, I will give us as much forward power as I can."

It worked. From the power of the engine combined to the power of the windlass, SeaLove slowly made her way out of the sandbar. The whole situation only lasted about thirty minutes.

"I raise my blouse to you, Captain," yelled Cynthia as Bill was coming forward after putting the engine in neutral.

"The expression is not I raise my blouse, but I raise my hat," said Bill.

"Well, I am not wearing a hat," replied Cynthia.

She raised her short blouse above her head.

“Good job, Captain, good job.”

“Cover these things, will you. I have enough problems.”

Bill rolled the anchor in and returned to the helm. A few minutes later, SeaLove was correctly tied to the dock. Bill filled the fuel tank and asked his first mate to fill the water tanks. Cynthia stepped down on the dock and did as she was told. She leaned forward and low, without bending her knees and almost placing her butt in the face of the young attendant.

“Tell me, honey,” said Cynthia to the young man. I see that you have a bar back there. Do they serve food?”

“Yes, ma’am, they do!”

“Is it any good?”

“I find it great but a little expensive for me.”

“Hey, Bill,” asked Cynthia, “are we anchoring next to these boats tonight?”

“That’s the plan.”

“Well, since the dinghy is already in the water, why don’t we anchor the boat, rest a little, change, and come to this bar for dinner. This guy says the food is good.”

“Works for me,” replied Bill.

Less than half an hour later, SeaLove was well anchored among boats that were somewhat older and smaller. Bill proudly stood on the swim platform, looking around while waiting for Cynthia. They both had taken a little afternoon nap and, as she said, she needed to make herself pretty. The weather was rapidly changing. Clouds were coming from the west, and it seemed like the wind would switch to the southwest.

The plan was to leave Lake Worth at midnight. They would sail all night on a course of 100 degrees. Bill wanted to reach Memory Rock in the early morning light. Sailing on a heading of 100 degrees would be going further south than needed; but Bill had to take into

consideration the current of the Gulfstream flowing north at about 2.5 nautical miles per hour. Every hour, during the crossing to the Bahamas, Bill would take a fix on his position and correct his heading if necessary.

Cynthia appeared in the cockpit only wearing a sexy wrap around with flowery designs. It was a Hawaiian style sarong—totally open on her left leg and crossing over the chest like a big letter X.

“Do you have anything under that?” asked Bill.

“I will let you find out later.”

Bill had installed the Mercury motor on the dinghy. He climbed down into the little boat, sat down on the edge, and helped Cynthia off SeaLove.

“You don’t have anything under this dress,” said Bill.

“Are you looking under my dress, Captain?”

“And you are not wearing any shoes,” added Bill.

“I don’t have any shoes to wear with this dress. It would not match the style. I will let you know, my ignorant Captain, that I am wearing a Hawaiian sarong. The girls in Hawaii, while dancing in these dresses, do not put anything on their feet.”

She sat down on the edge of the inflatable dinghy, right across from Bill.

“I don’t care if you wear shoes or not. My point is that you may hurt yourself on the docks while walking to the bar. The wood on these docks can be rough. If you step on something sharp, like an old nail, you could injure your pretty feet!”

“Well, Bill, you worry too much. Anyway, if the docks are as bad as you say, I will give you the honor of carrying me!”

“Is that supposed to be an honor?” asked Bill while approaching the dock ladder. “OK, we are here. Be careful climbing out.”

She climbed a few of the seven steps of the ladder ahead of Bill, stopped, looked down, and said: “Now, Billy Baby, are you

looking up my dress again? If you want, you can play with it later.”

“You are incorrigible,” said Bill with laughter in his voice. “I am not looking up your ass. I am tying the dinghy!”

As soon as they got on the docks, Cynthia said: “I see what you meant, my sweet captain. I can’t walk on this shit. Please, please, daddy, carry your little girl!”

Before Bill could say anything, Cynthia threw herself against him and let herself slowly fall toward the docks. He picked her up before she was totally down and walked toward the Bar.

“I knew you were a pain, but this much of a pain...”

“But you love me anyway, don’t you, my sweet-as-peanut-butter captain?”

“Hum,” said Bill as they entered the open air bar.

There were no walls surrounding the restaurant. A few pilings kept the roof in place. The furniture was composed of about ten old tables, lots of chairs and a long bar with about twenty stools. A few couples and two single men were at the bar. Most of the tables were occupied. The clientele was mostly men, talking loud and drinking beer with a few women here and there. With the exception of the two waitresses, the clothing style was mostly shirts or T-shirts, shorts, and boat shoes. Bill entered and set Cynthia back on her feet.

“Thank you, my captain!”

She turned to face him, placed her arms around his neck, and put a loud kiss on his cheek while lifting the lower side of her left leg off the floor.

The room became silent. Everybody looked. Even the waitresses stopped walking and turned toward Bill and Cynthia.

“We are here for dinner,” said Bill somewhat displeased with all the attention. “Where should we sit?”

Janine, the closest waitress, was a short girl with long blonde hair and seemed to be covered with tattoos. She was well into her fifties, wearing very short shorts and high heel shoes. Her blue blouse was see-through and under you could easily make up the push-up bra.

“Her boobs are fake,” whispered Cynthia to Bill; they are not real!

“Do you mind sitting at the bar?” asked Dona, the other waitress. “It’s comfortable, and unless you want to wait, that’s all I can offer you right now. You would get faster service!”

Dona was the total opposite of Janine. She seemed a little younger but had no sex appeal whatsoever. Her short dark hair, rested on a long, skinny head, where the nose was dominant. She was tall and slim. She looked more like a man than a woman. She wore a pair of blue jeans, an oversized white T-shirt, and a pair of black sandals.

“The bar will be fine,” said Bill. “Do you agree, Cynthia?”

“Sure, as long as the food is good. I’m starving.”

Dona walked toward the far end of the bar, away from where other people were sitting. She turned toward Bill and Cynthia, silently inviting them to follow her. She could not keep her eyes off Cynthia. It was easy to tell that she was quite impressed by her new client. She pulled the barstool back a little to help Cynthia take place. While pushing the seat under Cynthia, Dona’s left hand gently fondled the skin of Cynthia’s back.

“Thank you,” said Cynthia with a mocking smile. “What’s good for dinner?”

“I will be your server. Our clam soup is very good, all of our steaks are the greatest, and if you like fish, we have fresh grouper tonight. We got it today.”

Dona walked around the counter and asked: "Would you like something to drink?"

Bill noticed Dona's interest for Cynthia. He also noticed that the other waitress was fuming.

"What would you like, Cynthia?" Asked Bill.

"I feel like a good Margarita. Do you make good Margaritas?"

"Yes, we do," replied Dona. "I will prepare it for you myself and it will be very special! And you, sir?"

"I am sure it will be special," said Bill with one of his ironical smiles. "I will have the same."

"She is a butch," whispered Bill to Cynthia's ear. "I think she wants you, interested?"

"You are disgusting, Bill. I would rather sleep with you than with her!"

"You are already sleeping with me, you super ding dong!"

"Well, if I am already sleeping with you, why would I want to sleep with her?"

"Cynthia, have you ever been with a lesbian?" asked Bill, staring at Dona.

"None of your business, Bill. Look at these two girls! In fact, I think they are a couple. Fake boobs and skinny ass, are a couple."

"If that is the case, we know which one is the male. Can you imagine these two in bed together?"

While they were exchanging these comments, Janine was stepping behind the bar. She gave Dona a mean look and attended the needs of another client. Meanwhile, the people in the bar had returned to their conversation. Some men were still looking in Cynthia's direction. Bill knew exactly what they were thinking and saying about his first mate.

After receiving their long, tall glasses of green Margarita, Cynthia ordered the clam soup with house salad and the grouper

as a main course. Bill requested soup, salad, and a medium rare T-bone steak.

“Good Margarita,” said Cynthia loud enough so that Dona could hear her. “She is a good bartender. Don’t you think, Bill?”

“Very good,” said Bill. His interest was more directed toward, Janine, the other waitress.

“This girl is totally disgusting to me,” said Bill. These fake boobs and all these tattoos. Why would she do that to herself?

“You don’t like fake boobs?” asked Cynthia.

“No, I do not, and I don’t like tattoos on my girls either.”

“Did you ever have sex with a girl with fake boobs?”

“Yes, I did, once or twice. I did not like it.”

“Why, what is the difference? You mean, you would not like me if mine were not real?”

“I don’t know how to explain it, Cynthia. It’s not the same. I like the softness of the real stuff. Fake breasts feel different. It’s hard to explain. Plus there is psychological question here.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, hum...”

Bill stayed pensive for a short moment while Dona placed their soups and salads on the bar. She stared at Cynthia for a second, smiled, and walked away.

“I mean,” continued Bill, “a good-looking girl who has small breasts or regular size breasts can be very appealing to me. She will go through life, being who she is and living with what she’s got. Small breasts are not an infirmity.”

“For certain girls it might be,” said Cynthia.

“Look,” added Bill, “a person who has a real infirmity, like missing a leg. If that person gets a prosthesis, that’s OK with me. It is not a question of vanity. A woman who gets fake boobs, who pays a lot of money for the operation, well, she is weird to me. In my mind, she is not a truthful person. She wants to use her

sexuality to attract a mate with false tools. The moment you see her naked, how can you trust her?"

"What if she had breast cancer?" asked Cynthia.

"That's a different story. I am talking about these women who only have breasts augmentations as a seduction tool. To me and a lot of men, I tell you these women are as fake as their boobs."

"Hum... very severe judgment, my captain. So if I had fake breasts, you would not be with me?"

"I don't know," replied Bill. "But I don't think I would enjoy your body as much. I probably would not trust you."

"You trust me?" asked Cynthia with an amusing, surprised expression.

"Probably more than I should. But if these grapefruits of yours were silicone, I would not place as much confidence in you."

The steak was tender and perfectly cooked, the way Bill liked it. Cynthia was equally satisfied with her meal. While they were eating, Bill noticed that Janine and Dona were aggressively discussing at the other end of the bar. He could not hear what was being said but could guess that it was a lovers' quarrel.

Cynthia made a gesture toward Dona, who rapidly walked toward her clients.

"Would you like anything else?"

"Yes, I would like a coffee. Before you get it for me, could you come on this side of the bar, next to me?"

"Why?" said Dona.

"I want to whisper something in your ear."

While Dona was going around the bar, Bill looked at Cynthia with an intrigued face and asked, "What the hell are you doing, you crazy nut?"

Cynthia ignored the question and kept her eyes on Dona walking toward her. She pulled Dona very close, placed her arms

around her lower back, just above the buttocks, and slowly whispered in her ear, "Did you like touching my skin before? Did it turn you on? Would you like to do it with me?"

Before Dona could say anything, Janine grabbed her and pulled her away from Cynthia and started screaming, "What the hell is going on here?"

"Is this girl your private property?" asked Cynthia.

Cynthia was calm and had a devilish smile. Janine was in a full state of fury. All the customers in the bar, including Bill, were paying attention and could hardly believe what was going on. Dona rushed out of the bar, probably not to be seen again that night.

"Get out of here, bitch, before I kill you," said Janine to Cynthia. "Both of you get out of here."

"OK, if that is what you want, we will leave. Come on, Bill. I don't think we are wanted here."

Cynthia stood up, grabbed Bill's hand, and pulled him toward the docks. Docile, Bill followed Cynthia. He was only half amused by the incident.

"Yes, get out of here, you goddamn bitch. If you ever come here again, I'll tear your face apart."

Janine followed Cynthia to the edge of the bar but never touched her.

"You're a whore, a goddamn whore."

Cynthia totally ignored Janine. Once on the dock, she asked Bill: "Will my sweet, two-legged horse carry me back to our dinghy?"

Without saying anything, Bill easily lifted her off the ground and took her to the dinghy. On the way to SeaLove, Cynthia said: "Well, that was fun!" Bill looked at her.

"You may become a dangerous liability."

"Well, we got a free meal!"

In the middle of this crazy event, Bill had completely forgotten to pay for their meals. Of course, nobody ever gave them a check to pay. What a crazy woman that Cynthia was. He saw the anchor light of SeaLove a few hundred yards away. He steered his inflatable in that direction.

“It is now almost 8:00,” said Bill. “Let’s get aboard and try to sleep for a few hours. We will pick up anchor no later than 12:00. We don’t have much time to sleep!”

“No nooky, my captain? That is pitiful. I’m all turned on!”

Chapter 4

Yesterday or Later: Out on the Ocean, Let's get to Know Cynthia

At 12:15 a.m., SeaLove was sailing out of Lake Worth Inlet. The clouds had rolled in during the evening. The light wind was out of the south, southwest. They were leaving the inlet with the tide and had to go through some fairly good waves before SeaLove was about a mile from shore.

In front, the ocean looked like a black hole. The light from shore reflected on top of the rolling white caps. From experience, Bill estimated that they were facing a four to five-foot sea. The choppy waves were short and right on the nose of the vessel. He turned around and looked at Florida behind them.

"Say good-bye to Florida, Cynthia. It will be a while before we see this coastline again."

"So long Florida. You were fun for a while, but you became totally boring!"

Bill turned his face east, toward the ocean. His eyes were no longer adjusted to the deep darkness in front of him. It took him a few seconds to adapt his vision. Cynthia, of course, had the same problem.

"It's black as shit out there, Captain. How do you know where we are going?"

"I just know!" replied Bill. "Cynthia, I want you to go down below and make sure that all the ports are closed and locked. Everything should be in its right place. Make sure nothing can become a flying object and a problem if we get into rough water."

"We have already done that, Captain!"

"I know, check again. Also, make sure the security bag and the life jackets are easily reachable."

"Yes, sir, Captain Sir. Anything else, Skipper?"

Bill did not answer. Cynthia left the cockpit. Bill made sure his course was still set at 100 degrees, that the tachometer indicated 20 rpm and that all the navigation lights were on. He had decided to raise the main sail only halfway up. At a speed of 6 knots, SeaLove was going forward faster than the wind. Bill could have raised the main sail all the way to get a little more stability, but he did not think it was worth it. Cynthia returned into the cockpit. Bill said, "I think we will have to motor all night. Not enough wind. Everything OK down there?"

"Yes, everything seems fine. I'm a little sleepy!"

"You can go back to bed. I will take the first watch and will wake you up in two hours."

"Should I sleep here in the cockpit or should I go to bed?"

"I suggest you go to bed. If you prefer to sleep in the cockpit, get a pillow and a blanket. It is a little cool tonight."

"I'll go to bed alone like a church mouse!"

Cynthia placed a soft kiss on Bill's lips and left. Nothing special happened during Bill's watch. The waves became a little bigger. A few landed over the nose of SeaLove. She would graciously bow to meet them. It was getting cooler. Bill went to the bar, next to the galley, and took a little shot of his favorite and rare Cognac. He stopped at the nave table to take a fix on the present position. They were about 10 nautical miles from shore. He decided that no correction was needed at this time. He made a couple of entries in the log book and came back to the cockpit while putting his light yellow sea jacket on. Around 2:45 a.m., he was feeling quite sleepy. He took another look at the navigation instruments and made a light correction on the auto-pilot. He calculated that a heading of 102 should take him right to Memory Rock. It was time to wake up Cynthia.

"Wake up, sleepy eyes. It's your turn to be on watch. It's three o'clock!"

"Leave me alone! I didn't sleep enough. Come back in one hour."

"You might as well get out of bed before I pull you out," said Bill, laughing.

"OK, OK! But I want you to know that you are a major pain!"

Cynthia unhurriedly rolled out of bed, stretched her long arms, and yawned as if she was ready to swallow her pillow.

"Will I have time to make myself a coffee before you go to bed?"

"Sure, and while the coffee is brewing, I will show you what to watch for on deck."

After preparing her coffee, Cynthia climbed the step ladder. Bill was already in the cockpit.

"It's cold out here. Let me put a coat on."

She went back down, put on a green woolen sweater and a yellow wind breaker over it. She returned to the cockpit

"All right, what do you want to tell me?" She seemed in a poor mood.

"Nothing too complicated," replied Bill. "First of all, keep an eye all around the boat. If you see a boat or a ship out there, try to figure out its distance and in what direction it is going."

"Have you seen any boats so far tonight?" asked Cynthia.

"No! I have not. You must also keep an eye on the compass, the autopilot, the wind direction, and our speed."

"What is our speed?"

"We are averaging about 6 knots. If you feel lonely, you can always listen to the weather channel on the VHF or read a book."

"Did you get a weather report tonight? Is the weather supposed to change?"

"They are not forecasting any changes. The wind is still out of the southwest. Too weak to help us sail."

“All right, Captain! I’ll get my coffee, and you can go to bed. At what time should I wake you up?”

“If you can, give me about two hours. Wake me up around 5:00 a.m. If something abnormal happens, come and get me.”

Bill left the cockpit and headed to the captain’s cabin. Cynthia followed him down. The coffee was ready. She poured some in a cup and said: “You could say good night. Where the hell are your manners?”

“Good night, Cynthia! I never said I had manners. I said I was a good captain!”

- “The same captain who got us aground yesterday?”

As she left the galley, Cynthia was laughing. She sat in the helmsman’s chair, looked around a little, and took a first sip of her coffee. She observed SeaLove’s easy encounter with the incoming waves. She looked at the sky; not a star in sight. About ten minutes later, she put her coffee cup down on the cockpit table, grabbed the binoculars, and looked all around the boat. At first, she could not see anything. Eventually she saw a white light northeast of SeaLove. She kept an eye on it. Fifteen minutes later, the light was getting brighter and she could see it without the binoculars. The growing intensity and duplication of the light made her think that she was looking at one or maybe a few fishing boats.

She leaned back on the seat and closed her eyes. A few seconds later, she was asleep. She woke up when a wave, a little bigger than the others, hit the front of the boat. The different noise and movement surprised her. She took a look around SeaLove to make sure all was fine. The time was 3:45 a.m. The lights on the ocean were getting closer. Their direction was further north of SeaLove than before. Cynthia figured they were not on a collision course. Looking carefully, she could see two boats. They were definitely fishing boats. She picked up the handset of the VHF, made sure she was on channel 16, and said: “This is the sailing vessel

SeaLove calling the fishing vessels. We are on a course of 102 degrees. We are about a mile south of you. Can you read me?"

She waited a few minutes. No answer. She placed her call again. The second time around, she received an answer.

"This is the fishing vessel 'HighMar 3.' Go to 68 please."

"68," repeated Cynthia.

Cynthia entered the number 68 on the VHF radio and said: "SeaLove on 68. Can you read me?"

"I can read you loud and clear. Are you in need of assistance? Over."

"No," said Cynthia. "I am alone in the cockpit, my skipper is sleeping. I was getting a little bored when I saw your lights. I also wanted to make sure we are not on a collision course, over."

"We are not," said the voice. "As long as you keep heading east, we won't have any problems. We are circulating about a mile north of you. I can clearly see you on our radars. All of our fishing nets are extended. Over."

"Is the fishing good? Over."

"I'm not quite sure. I'm alone on the top deck, steering the boat in circle. The captain is on the lower deck with the rest of the crew. They will let me know later if we had a good night. Over."

"How many people on your boat?" Asked Cynthia. "Over."

"All together five. And you? Over."

"Two. Just me and the captain. Over."

"So where are you going? Over."

"Around the world. First we go to the Bahamas and then we will head to Bermuda. Over."

"Why go to the Bahamas? You could turn north, follow the Gulfstream to Bermuda. You would be there in a few days! Over."

"Well, the captain wants to go to Green Turtle first and then to Marsh Harbor. He has some business there. Over."

"You refer to him as your captain. Is he also your husband? Over."

"No, he is not. I only met him about six months ago! Over." Cynthia knew that she was talking too much. But why not, she would never meet the guy.

"What's your name?" said the voice. "Over."

"Cynthia. And you? Over."

"I'm Charles. Tell me, this guy; is he much older than you? Over."

"Yes," said Cynthia. "About twenty years older. Why? Over."

"Just wondering," said Charles. "That's usually the case. These older guys with a little money, they look for a young girl to take on trips. Over."

"Well," hesitated Cynthia, "you got it. But I wanted to do the trip. I love being on the water, and I always wanted to see the world. So it works for me! Over."

"Do you love him?" asked the voice. "Over."

"Not really. But he's OK. So far he treats me good."

Cynthia hesitated, wondering why she was carrying on with this conversation.

"What about you?" asked Cynthia. "Are you married? Over."

"Yes," said Charles. "But I wish I was not. I could pick myself a young chick and travel with her as your captain does. Is he married? Over."

"He says he's not. He says he's divorced. Either way, I don't care. Over."

"How did you meet him? Over."

Cynthia hesitated and paused. She was not sure she should answer all these questions.

"Why do you ask? Over."

"Just making conversation. Our signal is getting a little weaker. We are getting further from each other. Over."

Cynthia decided to pursue the conversation. She enjoyed it.

"He placed an ad on the Internet. He said he was looking for a female companion, with sailing experience, to sail around the world with him. He got a bunch of answers. I was one of them. Over."

"Where were you living? Over."

"All over. I am originally from Detroit, but I lived all over the place. When I met him, I was in Florida. Over."

"Were you working someplace when you saw his ad? Over."

"Yes. Over."

"You don't want to tell me where you were working? Over."

Cynthia hesitated one more time. She did not really want to answer the question. It was getting a little personal. But who cared? She would never see him again, might as well keep playing the game. The radio signal was weakening. She made a few adjustments and said:

"I was working in a men's bar as a waitress and some time as a dancer." She paused a little. "I worked in many bars across the country. I was making good money. Over."

"You must be cute and sexy then? Over."

"I'm all right. Men seem to like me. As you know, they all want the same thing. Over."

The communication was getting weaker and weaker. It was now difficult to clearly hear what Charles was saying. Looking in the direction of the lights, she noticed they were rapidly fading away, northwest of SeaLove's position.

"Can you still hear me, Cynthia? Over."

"Yes, I can, but it's a very bad reception. Over."

"Look, if you ever get fed up of your old man, call me. My boat is HighMar 3, out of Fort Pierce. Over."

"Good night, Charles. Good night. Over and out."

Cynthia turned the radio signal back to sixteen and replaced the mike back in its place. The time was 4:15 a.m. She sat down on the port-side thick cockpit cushion, thinking that men were all the same. This Charles never met her, and he already wanted to get in her pants. She laid down and put a small pillow under her head. She was thinking about Charles.

“I wonder what he looks like. I wonder what his wife looks like. Hum... he may be good in bed...”

She fell asleep.

Chapter 5

Yesterday or Later: The Storm

Bill had gone to bed fully dressed. He suddenly woke up. His instinct was telling him something was not right. SeaLove's motion was different. He looked at the time: 4:25 a.m. He sat in bed and paid attention. Something was wrong. He put his shoes and jacket on, rushed out of the cabin, ran through the salon, and rapidly climbed the ladder. As he stepped into the cockpit, he had to face reality. Cynthia was sleeping, the wind had changed to the northeast, and the sea was building up.

"Cynthia, wake up. We've got problems."

She sat on the cushion, looked at him, and said, "What's up? What's going on?"

"We are getting into a squall! What the hell were you doing sleeping? You were supposed to be on watch!"

Bill stood behind the wheel and checked the instruments. The wind speed indicated 32 knots from the northeast. The motor was still at 20 rpm and the speed had dropped to less than 4 nautical miles. He looked forward and could not see much. The waves were much bigger than before and were hitting the bow with more strength. The spray completely covered the front deck, and much of it reached the cockpit.

"It's going to be a rough and wet ride," said Bill. "Cynthia, quickly run down below, get our storm gears, put on your life jacket, and rush back as fast as you can."

"I am sorry, Bill, I should have paid more attention."

Cynthia rapidly walked toward the companionway.

“We will worry about that later,” said Bill. “Do what I asked you to do. Make sure to close the hatch on your way in and on your way back.”

Cynthia disappeared through the companionway; Bill brought his attention to the instruments. The wind indicator was now showing a wind speed of 40 knots. The autopilot had trouble keeping the boat on course. Bill decided to take control of the wheel and to steer SeaLove on the same course of 102 degrees.

He looked forward and noticed that the waves were hitting the bow with much more violence. The spray was getting considerably worse. In fact, the spray was almost reaching mid mast. The speed indicator was now displaying a forward speed of 2 nautical miles per hour. SeaLove became difficult to steer. Bill increased the rpm to 25. It gave him better control, but the spray became worse. He was wet to the bones.

“What the hell is that girl doing?” he said to himself.

A light drizzle became a major downpour. Big drops of water were falling like nails. Even if Bill was standing at the back of the cockpit and under the bimini, the wind was blowing the rain and the spray from the bow right into his eyes. He was almost blinded. Cynthia came out of the companionway with her storm gear on. She was wearing a heavy rain suit, a life jacket, and a heavy hat tied under her chin.

“Here is your coat, Bill!”

“Close the hatch before you give me the coat. Do you want to get everything totally wet down there?”

“OK! OK!”

She closed the hatch and screamed: “It’s wet like hell up here. Are we OK, Bill?”

She rushed toward him and handed the storm jacket. She was a little surprised to see that Bill was laughing.

"How can hell be wet? I was told that hell was fire?"

"Funny, funny! Here, put on your coat. I can't believe how soaked you are. Are we OK?"

"I'm fine! We're in a squall. Since the wind is coming from the northeast, almost dead ahead, we're just in the beginning of the squall. It's probably going to get worse before it gets better."

"What's a squall?"

"You are living it, my dear. It's a storm that can be severe. It does not normally last too long. Some people call it a gale. In fact, we are in a strong gale. The winds are now up to 40 knots!"

Bill noticed the high swells of the sea. The waves were up to at least 6–10 feet and very short. SeaLove's bow was going up and down, violently splashing on the water. The sea took a white appearance of foam blown in very dense streaks, making it impossible to see forward. Sitting on the starboard cushion, Cynthia tried to look forward, but as soon as the spray hit her face, she turned her head and body back to face toward the stern of the boat.

"How can you see where we are going?" Cynthia was shouting so Bill could hear her.

"I can't see anything. I keep my eyes on the compass and concentrate on the reaction of the boat to keep her on course as much as I can. In fact, my eyes are burning, and I am getting tired."

"Don't ask me to steer, Bill! There is no way I could. Man, just sitting here I'm getting tired. I'm scared. I'm cold!"

"It's going to be a long night," said Bill. "I hope this squall is not too wide. I don't know how long I can do this."

About fifteen minutes later, the wind was coming from the north, hitting abeam. The rain was entering the cockpit with much strength. The sea was still tumultuous but had changed direction. With the waves hitting her from port side, SeaLove was not producing as much spray but was rolling in a constant motion. A few waves, higher than the others, would hit the hull and break on deck.

The cockpit was occasionally almost filled with the wet stuff. Bill noticed that the cockpit drains were rapidly evacuating the water. The dinghy, attached to the davit, was moving from port to starboard in a very dangerous way. Bill was a little worried that it would break loose or would endure some chafing.

“Cynthia, I need you to hold the wheel. I have to add a few more lines to secure the dinghy.”

“No way, Bill. I’m not getting out of my seat. I’m scared like crazy! There is no way I can steer the boat.”

“Cynthia, I am not asking you. I am telling you! Come here and come here now!”

A reluctant Cynthia got up very carefully, holding on to anything she could. She slowly made her way next to Bill. A long flash of lightning crossed the sky followed by a rumble of thunder.

“You are an asshole, Bill. I should have known that you were an asshole the first time I met you!”

“Never mind what I am.”

Bill softened the tone of his voice.

“I will stand next to you for a minute. Now, take the wheel, don’t try to look forward, just bring your eyes on the compass. As you can see, we are heading between 95 and 105 degrees. As soon as the bow starts going too far to port or starboard, turn the wheel gently to compensate. Keep her between 95 and 105 degrees, and we will be fine. Now do it. Take the wheel!”

“I don’t like this,” grumbled Cynthia. “I don’t like this at all.”

She stepped into Bill’s place and grabbed the wheel.

“I will stand next to you and make sure you are doing well.”

“Sure.”

She brought her eyes down on the compass. She only used her right hand to steer. She used her left to prevent the rain from hitting her face.

“Put both your hands on the wheel.”

“The rain hurts my eyes, damn it!”

“Adjust your hat,” said Bill.

She finally did as Bill said. He watched her for a while and helped her keep the boat in the right direction.

“You’re doing fine. Just keep it up. I will be right behind you.”

A thunderbolt abruptly appeared in the northeast sky. Bill bent down and opened the starboard lazarette to pull out a strong line. He tried to avoid water from entering the lazarette but without success. A large wave broke right into the cockpit, surged in the opening, leaving gallons of water where it should not be. Bill closed the cover; he knew he had a mess down there. Of course this water would end up in the bilge, and the pump would take care of it, but all the lines and everything else will have to be cleaned with fresh water and dried.

He turned toward the steering wheel and helped Cynthia bring the vessel back on course.

“Don’t let her get out of control. Pay attention.”

“I’m doing my best, damn it!”

Bill observed the dinghy. The poor thing was rolling back and forth. The idea was to run a line around the hull of the small inflatable to pull it closer to the mother boat. He tried a few times but could never get the line from under the dinghy. As an alternative plan, he decided to run the lines around the tackles, suspending the dinghy under the arch. He first tied one end of the line to a stanchion. Holding firmly with his left hand on the arch, he managed to bring the line around the starboard side tackle. As he reached to get around the portside tackle, a wave hit him head-on. Bill lost his

balance. As the wave retracted from the stern of SeaLove, Bill fell forward and landed on the swim platform. Another wave hit the back of the boat. Bill tried to hold on but could not fight the strength of the sea pulling him off the swim platform. He rolled off the boat and found himself a few feet under water, just behind SeaLove. He surfaced on top of the water. Bill realized that he was still holding the line he had attached to the stanchion. He pulled as hard as he could to bring himself close to the boat. Another wave took charge of him and threw him back near the swim platform. He held on the line and on the swim ladder. Within seconds, he pulled himself back on board. He stood up, took a deep breath, and looked around him. The wind and the waves were now coming toward the stern of SeaLove.

"What's going on, Cynthia? What are you doing?"

"I don't know. I am doing what you told me to do."

"You let the boat get out of course! I fell off the boat!"

"No, I did not. I am right on course!"

Cynthia never noticed what had happened to her skipper. Bill looked and saw that she was turning the wheel from port to starboard in a complete sporadic way. Still holding the line attached to the stanchion, Bill took the wheel from Cynthia. He looked at the compass. They were on a heading of 170 degrees. He gradually brought the boat on the right course.

"You changed course, Cynthia. That was dangerous. I got thrown off the boat!"

"No, I did not!"

"You did not?"

"No, I did not. I did exactly what you told me to do!"

"So how did we get on a course of 170 degrees?"

"I can't help it if your stupid boat doesn't go where it's supposed to go!"

This being said, she left her position and went back to sit on the starboard cushion, turned her head, and faced south. Bill was

almost overwhelmed. How could she possibly not admit that she steered the boat out of course? He had to find another way to solve the dinghy problem. The instrument showed the wind had slowed down somewhat and that they were moving forward at 3 knots. Bill reduced the engine rpm back to 20 and engaged the autopilot. The swells were still coming toward the port side, but a little more aft than before. The rain, however, was still a heavy downpour. Bill sensed they would soon be out of the squall. He engaged the auto-pilot

Bill stood behind the wheel until he was confident the autopilot could keep the vessel on the right course. He turned back toward the dinghy and quickly managed to place the line around the starboard and port tackles. The work was done. He pulled hard on the line and attached the loose end to another stanchion. It was not the perfect solution, but it reduced the rock and rolling of the small vessel.

Bill returned behind the wheel and was happy to find that the strong autopilot was doing a good job. The damn thing had cost him a small fortune. In the situation he was now living, he was happy he had chosen quality over price. The speed was down to only 2 knots. He pushed the throttle forward and reset the rpm at 25. The regular purring of the engine felt good to his ears.

With everything under in control, Bill realized that he was wet and cold. In fact, he was shivering. Unlike Cynthia, he was not wearing his full storm gear. He never had time to go down and put it on. She did bring him his storm jacket, but he put it on over his wet sweater and light jacket. On top of that, he had fallen off the boat. What good would a storm suit have been? Maybe he would have drowned if he had the clumsy suit on. Plus, and that was stupid, he did not have his life jacket on!

A few minutes later, he was happy. The swells were lower and aft. Each one of them was pushing SeaLove forward. The speed indicator was showing a comfortable 6 to 7 knots; if only the drenching rain could stop. Trusting the boat could now take care of herself; Bill left his position and walked toward the companionway.

“Cynthia, I’m going down for a minute. I have to get out of these wet clothes.”

She was still looking toward starboard, totally ignoring Bill.

“Well, Cynthia, what do you think of our Atlantic bathtub now?”

Bill was trying to cover his impatience with her and asked the question in a pleasant tone of voice. Cynthia continued to ignore him.

“OK,” said Bill. “You want to be like that? Be like that. I’m going down below.”

Cynthia kept silent. Bill turned back toward her and said, “Look, you! I’m not to blame here. You are the one who slept while you were on watch and who could not keep the boat on course. I’m going to my cabin, take a hot shower and put some dry clothing on before I get sick. Don’t talk to me if you don’t want to and continue to act stupid, but keep an eye on things.”

“I heard you,” said Cynthia without looking at Bill.

Bill noticed the rain had almost stopped. The wind was now coming from north, northwest and had slightly calmed down. Once inside, he checked the instruments on the nav table. All was good. They were on the right course moving at about 5 knots. The time was 5:20 a.m.

Chapter 6

Yesterday or After: Disaster

Alone in the cockpit, Cynthia was crying. She could not help herself. With Bill on the bridge, she managed to hold her tears. Now it was different. Her pride was out of the way. She was not angry with Bill; on the contrary, she thought he had done a great job sailing SeaLove through the storm. She was disappointed with herself. How could she have been so incompetent? Of course she had never sailed at night on a wild ocean. She never lived through such a storm on a sailboat. She always figured she was a tough cookie. That she could take it. Now she wondered about herself. Was she a coward? Was she one of these useless females? The type of women she did not like.

“I wish I knew what Bill thinks about me?” she asked herself.

She shivered a little. Even with all these clothing on, Cynthia could feel the cold air and the unbearable humidity. She decided to do something useful. She got on her feet, stood behind the steering wheel, and looked at the instruments. They were on a course of 104 degrees. The speed indicator showed 5.2 knots. The apparent wind instrument indicated 14 knots, on the stern, coming from west, southwest. The sea was much calmer. She figured the gale was now behind them. She decided to stay behind the wheel until Bill got back in the cockpit. She would receive him with a smile and would apologize for her conduct. The storm was not his fault. He had the right to ask her for help. She was here to experience a fine trip but also to assist when needed. She was not only the cook, the lover, the cleaner. No, she was the skipper’s assistant. She could and would be as helpful as any man could have been. Having restored her trust in herself, she stopped crying.

She remembered that Bill wanted to sail on a course of 102 degrees. She studied the autopilot control for a minute and lowered

the heading from 104 degrees to 102 degrees. Bill came back to the cockpit.

"Hello, Bill! Do you feel better?"

"Yes, I surely do. How are things out here?"

"Just dandy. The storm is over, we are on course, and I beg you to forgive my attitude."

"Not a problem," said Bill. "It will show you to call my Atlantic a bathtub! You experienced a demonstration of her might."

"My apologies, dear Atlantic, and my apologies, my sweet captain. I will never again underestimate either one of you!"

"And what about SeaLove? She kept us safe on this wild ocean!"

"Thank you, thank you, SeaLove."

Cynthia bent down and kissed the steering wheel.

"So, Bill, you're not mad at me anymore?"

"I was never mad at you! I was a little surprised when you wouldn't talk to me but understood why you were overwhelmed."

"I sure was! I'm sorry, Bill. Next storm, I will be up to par."

- "I'm sure you will."

"Maybe, as we travel through the Bahamas, you could teach me a little more about sailing SeaLove. Show me what you would expect me to do the next time we face such a storm!"

"Well," said Bill, "this crossing is part of our mutual training. It is the main reason why we are going to the Bahamas. The main objective of this initial part of the trip is to learn more about SeaLove's performances in rough seas and to learn how to deal with each other."

"So you're really not mad at me?"

Cynthia left her position from behind the wheel and ran into Bill's arms. Bill took the hat off her head, placed a small kiss on her forehead, and replied, "OK, little girl. Go inside and do what I

did. Get undressed and take a nice hot shower. If you want to take a nap while you are at it, just do it."

"No! I will take a shower and come right back. I am not sleepy anymore. Would you like to have some shut eyes?"

"No, I will sleep after we sail past Memory Roc and are well in the Bahamas. The weather forecast predicts nice weather, and the temperature should be around 75 degrees this afternoon. We can get in our bathing suits, put a couple of deck chairs in the front, and take turn sleeping."

"Why would I have to put a bathing suit on?"

Both Cynthia and Bill were smiling. Bill did not answer the question.

"Will there be lots of boats around us over there?"

"No, not many. We are going to be in shallow open water with almost nothing around us except for a few little islands here and there. We will sail all the way to Sale Key and anchor there tonight."

"And then?"

Cynthia was now showing more interest.

"We will leave Sale Key, and the following night, we will be in Green Turtle, where we will clear custom."

"Is Green Turtle nice?"

"Yes, it is a cute, peaceful little town with a couple of fairly good restaurants. We will spend a few days there and then sail to Marsh Harbor."

"Sounds good to me, Bill."

They were face-to-face. He had his hands around her waist, and her hands were on his shoulders.

"Now, Bill, I have to tell you something. From now on, I will do as my captain asks and much better. But..."

"But?" asked Bill somewhat intrigued.

"But, later today, while we are on the front deck!"

“What?”

“I won’t be wearing a bathing suit!”

She pushed him a little, walked around him, opened the companion’s way, went down, closed the hatch behind her, and disappeared from his sight.

“What a strange girl,” said Bill to himself. “What a strange girl.”

He took position behind the wheel and checked the instruments one more time. All was fine. The depth sounder was indicating 000. It meant that they were still in very deep water. The depth sounder could not read through such deep water. When it would start indicating a depth, Bill would know that they are close to the reefs surrounding the Bahamas. He checked the GPS—about 15 nautical miles left to sail before reaching the Bahamas. The time was 5:36 a.m.

Cynthia came back onto the cockpit about twenty minutes later. Bill had wiped and dried all the cushions and was wiping the stainless steel. She was wearing a heavy blue sweater with collar up to the chin and a pair of blue jeans.

“Well, you kept busy, Skipper! I have something for you.”

She handed him a cup of hot chocolate and went back down to get her own.

“Is everything still fine?”

“Absolutely, we are now traveling at 6 knots. We should be near Memory Rock in about two hours. Daylight should be in less than one hour. It may be a nice sunrise! Thank you for the chocolate. It will hit the spot. After I’m done with this treat, I think I will fully raise the main sail. The way the wind is now, it will help us get some speed.”

“You are so welcome. Again, I’m so sorry, Bill. I don’t know what came over me. I got scared!”

“Hey, that’s quite normal. It’s a hell of a thing to be on such a small boat when all the elements are challenging us.”

Some noise attracted Bill’s attention: a strange rolling sound coming from the front of the boat.

“So we are OK, Bill?” asked Cynthia, sounding like a little girl.

“Listen,” said Bill, “can you hear this weird sound?”

“What? Oh yeah, that rumble? What is it?”

“I don’t know. I never heard anything like that before. It almost sounds like if a train was coming toward us.”

“Could it be a boat?”

“Could be, but if it was, we should be able to see its lights.”

The sound was getting gradually louder. The wind had completely stopped. The sea was calm. It felt like they were sailing on a mirror. The only disturbance on the water came from the hull displacement and the motor action of SeaLove. It was now easier to perceive the unexplainable noise. It sounded like a big waterfall.

“What the hell is this?”

Bill tried to see through the darkness in front of the boat.

“Bill, Bill, I’m getting scared again. What is it?”

“I don’t know. I really don’t know! Go down and get our life jackets!”

“What did you say?”

Bill repeated his sentence much louder: “Get our life jackets!”

“You don’t have to yell at me!”

Cynthia obeyed without any further questions. The big waterfall sound was getting louder and louder. Bill put on his life jacket and made sure that Cynthia was doing the same. He kept gazing beyond the bow but was still unable to see what was going on out there. His

heart was beating much faster. He looked at Cynthia. The poor girl was completely terrified. She had crossed her hands. She was saying, "Oh god, oh god, what is going on?"

SeaLove was moving forward very peacefully. A few feet ahead of her, there was not a ripple on the sea. Bill kept looking forward. The noise kept intensifying.

"Oh my god," said Bill.

"What is it?" asked Cynthia.

"Make your prayers, my sweet friend. A tidal wave is coming toward us."

Quick at the helm, Bill took his place behind the wheel and increased the rpm of the engine to the max. He turned the wheel hard over to starboard in order to face away from this enormous mass of water. He knew his chances were slim, but he was going to try to surf this monster. By now, Cynthia knew what was coming toward them. She was looking at this wall of water as if her eyes were ready to come out of her head. She stood and covered her mouth with her left hand.

"Sit down on the floor, Cynthia. Hold on to something!"

Bill could feel the stern of SeaLove rising above the level of the bow. The vessel kept gaining speed. The wave was rapidly sliding under as SeaLove was rising higher and higher from normal sea level. The bow was almost 60 degrees lower than the stern. SeaLove kept going forward shaking and trembling until she was on top of the wave. She stayed there for about a second like suspended in time. Still going ahead, SeaLove's altitude decreased as the wave was flowing under her.

Bill could not believe it. They had survived a tidal wave. His heart pounded in his chest. He could almost hear it. His whole body was trembling. His hands were holding so tight on the wheel that his fingers were hurting. Cynthia was on the floor, holding on to the base of the pedestal. She raised her head toward Bill. He

had never seen fear expressed so dramatically before. Her face looked like a Picasso painting. She started screaming: “Get me out of here. I can’t take it anymore. You’re killing me. Get me out of here.”

Bill had to admit that he was not feeling much better. What he would give to get off this boat, if only for one hour.

“I think we are safe, Cynthia. Take control of yourself. Start by getting off the cockpit floor and sit on the bench.”

“I can’t move. I can’t, I can’t!”

Bill looked around the boat. All the cushions were on the floor, almost on top of Cynthia. Everything else looked fine. He looked back, the dinghy was gone. Lines were dragging in the water. He slowed down the engine and gradually turned the vessel toward the east. The sea was calm, the wind almost nonexistent. Except for the comforting sound of the engine, the silence was perturbing.

“Come on, Cynthia, get off the floor. You can do it, sweetheart. We are OK now.”

Bill did not dare to let go of the wheel. He was holding it as if it was his anchor to security. He understood why Cynthia wanted to remain where she was. It started again, the noise, the same noise as before—the waterfall noise coming from the front of the boat.

“Oh no! Oh no! There is another tidal wave coming toward us.”

“No, Bill, no. I can’t take it anymore!”

Bill did not answer. He could not take it anymore either. Will he be able to master this new wave coming toward them? He stared forward. It was déjà vu. There it was, another wall of water. It seemed twice as high as the other. The noise by itself was terrifying. It sounded like if the space shuttle was coming at them. There it was. It would be easier to climb the Empire State Building

than to climb that wave. It was not a wave. It was a mountain of water.

“Hold on, Cynthia!”

Bill decided to duplicate his previous technique and try to run in front of the wave. He started a little late. By the time he applied maximum power and turned hard over to starboard, the wave was on them. SeaLove was rushing down a water slope. The propeller came out of the water; the rudder lost grip, the bow dove in and pitch poled. SeaLove broadsided. Bill was under water, head down, still holding on to the wheel. He thought of Cynthia. There was nothing he could do to help her or even to help himself. He closed his eyes and held his breath. He could feel the intense vibrations of SeaLove. The vessel turned over 180 degrees. The mast was out of the water. Bill noticed a touch of light emerging from the eastern sky. The motion kept going. The mast was returning under water. Bill looked for Cynthia; she was nowhere in sight. He took a deep breath and held on to the wheel with all his strength. The boat remained capsized, mast down for over a minute. It felt like hours. Bill was running out of air. Slowly, so slowly, gravity took over. The keel did what it was intended to do, and SeaLove took her rightful position on the surface of the water. Bill collapsed; he fell on the cockpit floor, totally knocked out.

Chapter 7

Yesterday or After: First Spiritual Contact

Bill regained conscience. He had a terrible cramp in his stomach. He coughed and vomited all over himself. He turned around to face the cockpit floor and kept coughing, spitting, and rejecting water out of his body. He opened his eyes and closed them immediately. His eyes were on fire. He had an excruciating headache. His heart was pounding at an accelerated speed. He could not hear anything. A total silence encircled him. He rapidly coughed a few more times, felt dizzy, and went to sleep.

Bill never knew how long he was stretched out on the cockpit floor. He could not even guess how long he had been unconscious or sleeping, but he could sense that it had been a good while. He tried to move and experienced all kind of discomforts. He tried to open his eyes. The eye lids seemed glued together. He managed to bring his body in the sitting position and brought his hands to his head. Bill gently rubbed his eyes with the back of his right hand and managed to open one eye, then the other.

“What is this? Am I blind?” said Bill almost screaming.

All he could see was a bright light surrounding him. He brought his right hand close to his face and was able to recognize the shape of his hand. He squinted and could see certain forms around him. He moved both his hands and found the steering wheel. He was sitting right under it. He grabbed the wheel and pulled himself up to the seat. The intense white light was encircling SeaLove and seemed to be without a source. Still squinting, he could distinguish some of the shapes and parts of his vessel. He was on SeaLove. The mast was still there. From where he was, he could not see any evident damages.

“How is that possible? This boat went underwater twice.”

He tried to look beyond the hull, toward the water. He could only see an impenetrable, luminous white wall, like if the boat had been inserted inside an absolute white enclosure.

“Where am I?” he shouted. “Am I dead?”

Bill stood up with difficulty and looked around himself. He could see SeaLove’s top side much better. He still could not hear any sounds. The silence was scary. He remembered being underwater for a certain length of time. Maybe his eardrums got busted. He looked at his wristwatch: 8:17 a.m.

“I don’t want to be deaf! I want to see where I am!”

He heard his voice. He heard himself yelling.

“If I heard myself, I can’t be deaf!”

He hit the cockpit floor with his foot and knocked against the lazarette cover. He could hear noises.

“I’m not deaf and I’m not blind. Where am I?”

He tried to look at the water surrounding him. He could not see anything. There was only light, white, unnatural light and a complete absence of sound. He had been absorbed by an absolute stillness.

“What the hell?”

His body was still unstable, but he managed to stand up. He looked around him searching for Cynthia. She was nowhere in sight.

“No, No, not, Cynthia! Don’t tell me Cynthia did not make it!” he yelled as loud as he could.

“Cynthia, Cynthia!”

He looked toward the companionway, it was still closed. Bill decided to go forward on the deck. He could not find a trace of Cynthia. What he discovered changed his original evaluation and confirmed that his boat had a serious encounter against the forces

of nature. The upper part of the mast was broken just above the lower shrouds and was partially resting on the deck and partially in the water. Parts of the standing rigging were all over the deck. The boom pulled apart from the mast was mostly in the water and still attached to SeaLove by the sheets and halyards.

“What a mess, how will I ever fix this?”

He looked toward the bow. Both anchors were off the boat. The chain locker’s lock was broken, but the anchor hatch itself was still there and almost closed. He figured the hatch opened and the chain came out when the boat was upside down. When the boat returned to her normal position, gravity closed the hatch back. The chains and ropes were still attached to their respective shackles. The windlass was also in place. He stepped on the power switch. The windlass was operational.

“Good,” he said. “I still have some electrical power.”

He assumed both anchors were still fastened to at other extremities. He pulled in both anchors. With great difficulty, he set them back on the bowsprit.

He decided to pursue his visit of SeaLove. Making sure he would not step on anything sharp or slippery on the deck, he returned to the cockpit. The bimini was very wet but still in place. Most of the cushions were gone and three were on the floor. He figured they had been protected by the bimini when the boat was upside down.

The arch was still there, and the dinghy motor was in its spot. Looking up, he was relieved to see that both solar panels had resisted the keel over. There seemed to be no damage on either one of the four winches. Both winch handles were gone. The dinghy was nowhere in sight.

“How can the lines be cut like that?”

Bill was holding on to the tip of one of the broken lines. He looked at the instrument board and the motor controls. All was in place. The instruments were still in operation, but each one of them indicated 000 including the compass and the GPS. He noticed that the key for the engine was in its place and in the on position. He turned it off, waited a few seconds, and put it back on. He pressed on the starter button. The engine did turn but would not start.

"I have juice that's good. I should be able to fix the engine."

He turned around to face the companionway. He almost feared to open the hatch.

"What if Cynthia is inside the boat? She may be dead in there!"

Bill was almost crying. He opened the hatch and stepped down slowly, carefully.

"God! What a mess, what a disaster!"

From the salon to the navigation table to the galley, all things that were not attached to the floor, the walls or the bulkheads, were all over the place. He advanced all the way inside and walked through the shambles. He visited the different cabins, the heads, and the storage areas: same mess everywhere. He sat at the edge of the nave-table chair and held his head. Cynthia was not in the boat. He cried like a baby for a few minutes.

"The radio! The VHF, it may be working!"

New deception, the instrument lights were on, but the radio was totally silent. *Of course*, he thought. The *antenna is probably broken and in the water*. He noticed very little water inside SeaLove. The hatch and the ports did a good job keeping the water out.

"What am I supposed to do now?"

He felt very tired, beat, and demoralized. He thought of Cynthia, was she still alive? Floating out there in the ocean, alone, scared. She

may be dead. If she was, she would not be suffering as much. He returned to the cockpit, picked up one of the wet cushion, and placed it under the sun. It was twenty minutes after nine o'clock. The sun should dry the cushion quite fast.

"Where is the sun? It's nice and warm, but where is the sun?"

Bill took another look around himself and around SeaLove. He still could not see anything out there. Except for the sound of his own voice or the noises he was making, the silence was omnipresent.

"Cynthia maybe close to the boat."

He walked around the deck looking at the water, checking every lines, halyards, shrouds, or stays. There was no sign of Cynthia.

"Poor girl, what have I done to you?"

Bill returned in the cockpit and placed the almost dry cushion on the starboard seat. He laid on his back, arms under his head. He could not endure the position very long and remembered how filthy he was. He was covered with spit and vomit. Bill returned inside the boat and walked toward the shower stall. He was pleased and amazed that the shower was functioning normally. He undressed, took a long shower, washed his hair, and rinsed his mouth. Out of the shower, he brushed his teeth and decided he had no reason to shave. He found something clean and almost dry to wear.

Back in the galley, Bill opened the refrigerator and the freezer. Things had moved around but all the food was saved. The refrigeration system was still in operation. He pulled a cold bottle of water. He opened the dry food compartment, same results. He grabbed two granola bars and returned to the cockpit. He slowly ate the light meal.

"Now what do I do? Maybe... I may be dead? I may be maybe in purgatory."

He never believed in purgatory, but what did he know?

“That is it!” he said loudly. “I’m dead, and I am in purgatory. This is my punishment. I took too much time planning, saving money, and preparing my boat. I neglected too many people. I did not have any religion other than this boat and the trips I wanted to make. I was bad and selfish. I had sex with too many women. I drank too much!”

Bill stood up in the cockpit and raised his arms toward the sky he could not see.

“OK, I’m guilty. I’m sorry! What do you want from me? What do you want me to do?”

Out of nowhere, a baritone voice, very low in tone yet easy to hear, spoke.

“Now you will learn!”

Bill looked around himself. Everything was the same. He was surrounded by that white light. The silence was complete. Did he hear a voice or was he going mad?

He shouted: “What is this? Did I hear a voice? Am I crazy?”

“Now you will learn,” repeated the voice.

“I am not crazy. I did hear a voice. Who are you? Are you God?”

“I am not God,” said the voice.

“Am I dead?”

“You are not dead!”

Slowly, with a long pause between each question, Bill asked: “If I’m not dead, what am I? Where am I? Who are you?”

The voice answered, also pausing between each answer: “You are yourself. You are here. I am what I am. I am who I am. I am Alpha–Omega.”

“The beginning and the end?”

“I am the beginning and the end!”

"Why am I here?"

"You are here to learn."

"Learn what?"

"What I will teach you."

"How do I call you?"

"I am the source of life. Call me Life."

"Life? You want me to call you Life?"

"I am Life. I am Nature. I am Alpha–Omega. I am the Creator. Without me, there can be no life."

"So, you are God!"

"God is a word that has been corrupted by man. Most human see God differently and have a different God. People kill and steal in the name of their God. I cannot be called God because of what humanity does in the name of God. I am Life. I am Nature. I am the Creator."

Bill figured he was dreaming. He was tired. He had fallen asleep. All this was unreal. There was no voice. Since he was dreaming, he would play the game.

"OK Life... Why am I here?"

"You are a son of Life. You are here to learn."

"Learn what?"

"Learn the message. You shall become the new prophet, the last messenger."

"The messenger of what?"

"The messenger of Life!"

"Are there others?"

"There were others."

"Do I know any?"

"You have heard of a few."

"Give me a name!"

"Jesus."

"Jesus? The son of God?"

"Jesus, the messenger of Life."

"Who else, give me more names?"

"Noah, Abraham, Moses, Muhammad, Joseph Smith... They were agents of Divine actions."

"I know these names. Were there more?"

"There were more."

"Why me? What do I have in common with these legendary biblical personages?"

"You were chosen."

Bill could not imagine that this conversation was real. Was he having a vision or was he in the middle of a nightmare? He was standing and talking toward a white light. Other than the voice, without direction, the silence was absolute.

"Where are you? Why can't I see you?"

"You can see the light. Light is Life. I am the light surrounding you. You can see me within yourself."

"Why did you choose me? I am just an incompetent sailor. I could not even sail my boat to the Bahamas. I probably killed a poor girl who truly deserved to live!"

"Do not underestimate yourself. You did not make it to your destination because Life interfered with your trip. You sailed the first storm with good seamanship, understanding and respecting the powers of the seas. You were kind toward your fellow sailor and understood her fears. You sailed through the first wave with courage and determination. Life was impressed by your ability to make it through. To capture you, we had to send a second tidal wave."

"Capture me?"

"As humans capture fish in their nets."

"Where am I? Can you at least answer that?"

"Humans call this area the 'Bermuda Triangle.' We have captured and studied many humanistic individual in this earth zone. It is what you could call our Central fishing ground."

Bill remained silent for a short while. The voice did the same. Bill sat down and asked, "Am I dreaming? Am I going mad?"

"You are not dreaming. You are not mad. You will become enlightened. You will share the knowledge."

"Knowledge of what?"

"Knowledge of life."

"If this whole situation makes any sense, why did you choose me?"

"You are here to fulfill your destiny. Answer the following queries!" asked the voice.

"I will if I can!"

"Do you like killing when you do not have to? Do you murder men, animals, or fish for pleasure?"

"No, I do not?"

"Are you not a medical doctor that helped men and animals? Do you respect life?"

"Yes."

"Did you not refuse war so that you would not have to kill others? Were you not incarcerated and called a deserter for this action? Did you not, in consequence, lose your right to practice medicine?"

"Yes, that is true."

"Don't you stand against the destruction of life in any form, including abortion?"

Bill got up from his seat.

"Yes! I believe in life! What do you want from me? I also believe in freedom. Set me free!"

"Once you have learned, once you are our messenger, Life will set you free."

"What happened to Cynthia?"

"She lives. You will meet her again."

Bill looked at his watch. It was no longer working. The voice said:

“Time is now irrelevant for you. You will soon enter a deep sleep. It will last for two of your years. You will acquire the supernatural and the divine secrets of Life. When you awake, you will become the last prophet and will serve as an intermediary with humanity. You will deliver your newfound knowledge to other humans. You will be the last messenger before the end of humanity. If they do not accept the message, if they do not listen, their tomorrows will be limited.”

Bill was standing, looking around himself, not able to understand or accept what was happening and what he was hearing. How could all this be possible? OK, he believed in life, in all forms of life. He could hardly kill a fly. Once, when he was much younger, he went hunting with some friends. He would always remember this magnificent moose, standing across the small lake. He took a picture while his friends were aiming their riffles. Bill yelled loud and pushed the hunters away. The moose ran. Bill was happy but not his friends. They had a few special words for him. He felt the same way about fishing. Poor little fish, he has the right to live too!

“Why would humanity listen to me?”

“They may not.” The voice felt gloomy to Bill.

“Then what?”

“After all others, you will be the last prophet, the final messenger.”

“I am nobody. They will not listen to me!”

“If they do not accept the message we will send through you, it will become the end of humanity and of many other forms of life. Men have sinned against the four elements for centuries. They have abused the air, the water, and the earth. Fire, the fourth element may become the tool of destruction.”

“If I am not dreaming. If this conversation is real, you are asking too much out of me. I am not a prophet. I am a man!”

“Today you are a man. When you awake, you shall be the new and last prophet.”

Chapter 8

Yesterday or After: Cynthia's Predicament

Cynthia realized the boat was capsizing. She was soon under water and totally terrified. She was still holding onto the base of the pedestal. Her head was in the cockpit. An air bubble made it possible for her to breathe, but it was getting hard to hold on. SeaLove was turning back to her rightful position. The cockpit filled with water. Cynthia could not hold anymore and let go. She rolled over and ended in the ocean. Thanks to the high buoyancy of her life jacket she surfaced a few seconds later. She was coughing and out of control. The sun was slowly rising. She found two cushions around her and grabbed them. While holding on, she pushed the cushions forward and tried to swim toward SeaLove. Moved away by the wind and by what was left of the second wave, the vessel floated away from her. SeaLove was rapidly out of her sight.

"Help, help, please, somebody help me!"

Cynthia was in a state of panic. She paddled in the water, turning in all directions, while screaming and crying.

"No, no, this can't be happening to me. Help, Help!"

She faced toward the east and could see the sunrise. The light calmed her down a little. She was not sure, but there seemed to be something floating on the ocean—nothing big but massive enough to block the sunlight at sea level.

"This must be Bill. Bill, Bill, I'm here. Come toward me!"

No answer, and the object or person she was looking at seemed to be slowly moving away from her.

"Bill, Bill! Can't you hear me? Bill, Bill! I hope he's not dead! Oh my god. I don't want to be here all by myself. Bill, Bill! Answer me!"

She began to swim vigorously toward the dark area on the water. She was pushing the two cushions ahead of her. She would sometimes take a little rest and put her head on one of the cushion. With constant crying, she realized she was gradually gaining. The distance between her and the object was getting shorter.

“What if it’s Bill? What if he’s dead? What will I do? Bill, Bill, Please don’t be dead. Swim toward me!”

With all the energy and courage she had left, Cynthia kept swimming. Eventually, she got close enough to the object to realize that it was the inflatable dinghy.

“It’s the dinghy. Oh my god! It’s the dinghy! I’m saved!”

She doubled her efforts and used her best breaststrokes. Cynthia was a strong swimmer but was moving too slowly toward this ephemeral safety. In order to increase her speed, she decided to get rid of one of the cushions, faced the sky, placed the second cushion under her back, and did the backstroke as if she was rowing a boat. With her feet creating rear propulsion, Cynthia progressed toward her destination much faster. She paddled for more than one hour.

“Dinghy, oh sweet dinghy, wait for me. Oh god, I’m getting closer. I’ll make it.”

She turned her head to look toward the dinghy, fell off the cushion, and found herself under water. She came up and searched for the cushion. It took her a few precious seconds to grasp that the inflatable was moving away in the wrong direction.

“No, No! Damn it! Get back here!”

Five minutes later, she seized the cushion. She was further from the dinghy. She rested a short while and placed the cushion under her as she had done before. She rowed and moved her feet up and down with desperation. Within two hours, it eventually paid off. Cynthia could almost touch the dinghy. A long white line was floating

behind the inflatable. She grabbed the rope and tied it around her body. Totally out of energy, she decided to rest awhile before trying to climb on board.

“Bill, Bill, where are you?”

She looked around her and saw nothing but the dinghy, water, and the sky. The sun was almost right over her head. She reckoned it was about noon.

“I have been in this damn water for more than six hours. I have to board this boat right now!”

Using the line, she pulled herself closer to the dinghy, placed her hands on the transom, and tried to climb on board. Nothing doing, she did not have enough strength left. The hull was almost twenty inches above the waterline. She fell back in the water, held on to the transom with one hand and screamed, “Shit, shit, shit! Bill, what have you done to me? How am I supposed to get in this goddamn boat? Why didn’t you install some way to climb into the wicked thing?”

Still crying, she started thinking: *“what would Bill do if he was here in my place?”*

From the water, she stared at the dinghy for a while. She developed a plan. All of a sudden, she knew what to do. Holding from the transom to the hull, on the starboard side of the boat, she pulled herself to the bow. Another rope attached to the front cleat was floating in the water. She pulled the line toward herself until she reached the free end. She untied the first line from her body and attached the two lines together until they were tight enough to form a step barely touching the water. She rested a little and proceeded to place her left foot into the curve of the rope. Pushing as much as she could with her foot, she tried to lift herself up enough to get a good grab onto the inside part of the hull. She almost made it, but the hull was too slippery. She could

not hold on and found herself back in the water about 5 feet from the dinghy.

“You stupid boat! Why don’t you want to let me in?”

She noticed that one of the blue cushions was a few yards behind her. She swam back to grab it, placed it under her chest, and swam back to the transom. She held on for a few minutes, asking herself what else she could do. She noticed that the transom was a little lower than the hull.

“Stupid me! This is where I need to install the step!”

She pulled herself back to the middle of the small boat and untied the lines from each other. She returned to the transom holding the two lines. She rolled the transom line around the port cleat of the hull and the bowline around the starboard cleat. She tied the two lines together with the middle resting on the surface of the water. She paused a little and inserted her left foot onto the tied ropes. Holding hard onto the transom, she lifted her body off the water and managed to pull herself into the dinghy.

“I got it! I’m in, you stupid boat. You wanted to keep me out! It didn’t work. I’m in!”

She rested on the plastic floor of the dinghy. She looked up at the sky. *Time must be around two o’clock*, she thought. Cynthia was tired and dehydrated. With major effort, she raised herself to a sitting position to see if the emergency bag Bill had attached was still there. It was there, securely tied to the inside cleats.

“Thank you, Bill. Oh, Bill, Oh, Bill I love you!”

She opened and looked in the bag. She found at least a dozen small bottles of water, some sodas, two plastic containers with breakfast bars, two pairs of sunglasses, a flashlight, a portable VHF radio, a small EPIRB, a tube of solar protection cream, a big and a

small knife, a sea-through bag with medicine and bandages. At the bottom, she found two blankets and two hats.

“Bill, you were right. You were so right!”

She remembered the day when Bill prepared this bag and tied it into the dinghy. She thought he was a little weird.

Cynthia knew she had to be careful with the water. She poured some in her mouth, rinsed and spitted the wet stuff overboard. She drank slowly and gradually.

“Oh god, this is so good. I never knew fresh water could be so good.”

She chewed on one of the breakfast bars and called it lunch. The plastic floor was a little hard on her derriere. She looked around her new home and saw her faithful swimming cushion floating about 10 feet away. She would absolutely not jump into the water to retrieve it. She had to find another way. She grabbed one of the lines, untied it from the other, and threw it toward the cushion. It took her four or five throws before the line landed on the cushion. She pulled gently; her mattress-to-be gradually moved toward her. Cynthia had to redo the operation a few times before she could declare victory.

“Got ya! You, beautiful, thing. You saved my life. Do you know that?”

Cynthia placed the cushion on the floor and laid on it. Left arm under her head, she stared at the sky. The sun was further west. It had to be at least four o’clock, maybe five. She was not very comfortable. Her sweater and jeans were waterlogged and sticking to her body. She removed the life jacket and undressed. She placed her clothing on the side of the inflatable, hoping the sun would dry them. She hesitated a minute and decided to put the life jacket back on. She positioned herself back on the cushion and was shortly out for the count.

It was almost dark when Cynthia woke up. She sat in the boat and became conscious of the reality. She was somewhere in the middle of the ocean, all by herself with no means to go anywhere. Fear took hold of her. Cynthia cried, "What am I suppose to do now? Bill, Bill, where the hell are you? How could you leave me here all by myself?"

She calmed down and reached inside the bag to grab a bottle of water.

"How stupid of me! There's a VHF radio in here. All I have to do is call for help!"

She reached for the radio and turned the button. A red light came on.

"It works. It works!"

The radio was already on channel 16.

"This is Cynthia. I'm in an inflatable dinghy. I am alone, can anyone hear me?"

She sent her message about fifty times and never received an answer. Desperation took the control of her. She laid back on the cushion, closed her eyes, and cried. Night was almost dominating the horizon when she sat and said: "What am I doing? There's an EPIRB in here."

Cynthia rapidly took hold of the instrument and activated it. A small yellow light came on, and she could hear a small BIP about every thirty seconds. She turned off the VHF, to save the batteries, drank more water, and chewed on another breakfast bar. She carefully had a nature's call at the back of the dinghy. This duty accomplished, Cynthia placed one of the blanket over the cushion, wrapped herself in the other, laid sideways on the cushion, cried a few more tears, and fell asleep.

Chapter 9

Yesterday or After: Cynthia and the Coast Guards

Cynthia was sleeping and dreaming that she was taking a cold shower. She woke up to realize that she was actually taking a cold shower. Not remembering exactly where she was, she raised her head and looked around.

“Oh no. I’m still in this stupid dinghy! It’s raining like hell! It’s cold!”

She wrapped herself in one of the blanket, carefully folded the other and placed it in the emergency bag. She drank from the raindrops while scrutinizing the sky and the horizon. The sun was rising east of her. Overall, the sky was fairly clear. As her luck would be, she was sitting under the only rain cloud. She had enough sense left to take advantage of the situation. She removed the blanket and rinsed her hair and body. She also washed and rinsed her clothing as much as possible and replaced them on the hull.

“At least I will be clean. I can’t believe what’s happening to me!”

She kneeled on the base of the boat and punched the inflatable side with both fists.

“Get me out of here! Somebody, please, get me out of here!”

She remembered the EPIRB and reached for it. It was still transmitting.

“I hope this damn thing is doing what it’s supposed to do.” She figured it was about six o’clock.

“Today must be Thursday. The fifth day of the god for saken trip. Somebody must be on the water!”

She picked up the portable VHF. “Hello, hello! My name is Cynthia. Can anyone hear me?”

After a few minutes of the one-sided communication, she threw the VHF radio on the floor.

“This damn thing is totally useless!”

She soon realized what she had done. The radio may not transmit too far, but if ever she caught sight of a boat, she would need it to call for help. She reached for the small radio, turned it off, dried it, and gently put it back in the emergency bag. She sat on the inflated edge of the boat, placed her elbows on her knees and her head on her hands, and sobbed.

The rain ended. The sun was rising. She figured that crying was not helping her.

“I must do something to keep my sanity. I must get busy!”

She took everything out of the emergency bag. She had eleven small bottles of water left, ten breakfast bars, and three sodas. Cynthia concluded she had enough water and food to last her three days. She took one of the bars and one bottle of water, sat at the base of the boat, and leisurely had her first meal of the day. The floor was a little wet. After breakfast, she used the wet blue blanket and wiped the boat from one end to the other. The temperature was nice and pleasant, the sea was calm. Cynthia removed her life jacket.

Around eight o'clock, Cynthia reentered the state of hopelessness. Still unclothed, she took a fetal position on the fiberglass floor and cried one more time. She found comfort from the sun on her bare skin and dozed off.

“Is there anyone on this boat? This is the US Coast Guard. Anyone aboard?”

Cynthia opened her eyes. She got on her knees and looked around. A big boat, about fifty yards away, was slowly getting closer. She stood up in the dinghy, waved, and screamed. She totally overlooked the fact that she was as naked as the day she was born.

"I'm here. I'm here. Please help me! Thank you, God."

The Coast Guard cutter was soon close to the dinghy. Two young seamen were on deck; one of them handed a line to Cynthia.

"Take this line, Miss. Can you tie it to the front cleat?"

"Yes, I can. Thank you for saving me. Oh my god. You can't imagine what I went through."

"You are fine now. We'll get you out of here."

The young man turned toward the other sailor and said: "Did you see the boobs on her?"

"Sure did!"

A third sailor came on the deck and took position next to the other two.

"I'm Lieutenant Gosselin. May I ask your name?"

"My name is Cynthia Faherty. Please get me out of here."

"We will get you out. I see that your dinghy is registered in the US. Are you an American citizen?"

"Yes, I am. If I was not, would you leave me here?"

"No, we would not. Could you please put your clothes on?"

Cynthia used her hands to cover herself a little.

"I'm sorry. I was alone and wet in this damn boat. I was trying to dry up and warm up. My stuff is still wet, but I'll put it on. Just give me a minute."

The officer turned around and ordered the other two seamen to do the same.

"I'm ready," said Cynthia. "Do you want me to give you my things?"

"No," said the lieutenant. "We will install a ladder and help you get on board our vessel. I would like to know if there are

other people we should look for and if you have any idea in what direction they would be.”

“There was only one other person on our sailboat. His name is Bill Morrison. I have no idea where he is or where the boat is. We got hit by a storm and...”

The officer interrupted her: “We will talk about this later. Let’s get you off this dinghy first.”

One of the young seamen installed the ladder. The other one climbed down into the dinghy. As soon as he was in, Cynthia dashed toward him and placed her arms around his neck. He was right at the edge of the dinghy. He lost balance and fell backward into the water. Cynthia fell on her knees and was able to hold on to the inflatable. The other young man, still on the Coast Guard cutter, found the situation quite amusing and burst out laughing. Lieutenant Gosselin also found the situation quite hilarious but managed to keep a straight face.

“Quiet, Paul! Are you OK, Alexander?”

“Yes sir , yes I am, sir.”

Alexander pulled himself back into the dinghy without any difficulty.

“I’m so sorry,” said Cynthia, unable to control a small giggle. “I was so happy to finally have somebody here to help me. I am very, very sorry, Alexander. That’s your name, isn’t it?”

“Yes, ma’am! It’s OK, ma’am.”

“Ms. Cynthia,” said the officer, “we are going to hold your vessel against ours. Please carefully climb up the ladder. I will give you a hand when you get close to our deck. Alexander!”

“Yes, sir?”

“Help her climb up, and when she is on deck, transfer all of her things to Paul.”

“Yes, sir.”

"Once this is done," continued the lieutenant, "Paul will help you bring the dinghy to the stern of our boat. Deflate it and pull it on board."

"Yes, sir."

Cynthia was fatigued and shaky. She had difficulties climbing the step ladder by herself. She managed a few steps and had to stop.

"Help her, Paul," said the officer.

"OK, sir. If you say so."

Paul placed both his hands on Cynthia's buttocks and pushed her up. Lieutenant Gosselin grabbed her right hand and pulled her on deck. Cynthia took a deep breath, smiled at him, and thanked him. She turned around and looked down at Alexander who was still standing at the bottom of the ladder.

"You have nice strong hands, Alexander. I enjoyed the ride up."

"Sorry, ma'am," said the young man, blushing a little. "I did not know what else to do to help you up."

"You did fine. Thank God and thank you. I'm out of this useless dinghy."

"It was not useless, ma'am," replied Alexander. "It saved your life."

The lieutenant brought an end to the conversation.

"Please follow me, Ms. Cynthia. I will take you to a cabin. You can clean up and rest a little."

"I would love some coffee and something to eat."

"We will bring something to your cabin."

"Thank you, you are very kind."

"Once you are feeling up to it, the captain will have a few questions for you."

"Of course. Who is the captain?"

"The man up there on the bridge, looking at us. Captain Conway."

"Are there any females on board?"

"No, we have four men."

He guided her toward the crew quarters and opened a small cabin door for her.

"You should be fine here. The heads and shower room are just across the passageway."

"Thank you."

"When you are ready for the debriefing, give us a call. There is a radio/headphone on the table next to the bunk."

"I will. How far are we from shore?"

"From Florida?"

"Yes."

"We found you about 10 nautical miles west of the Bahamian coast. We are about 60 nautical miles, east-southeast of Canaveral Inlet. I would say that we are around 60 nautical miles from our base. Can you give me any information about the whereabouts of the sailboat?"

"Well, we were crossing from Lake Worth to Memory Rock. That's all I know."

"Rest a little and get ready. We will talk later."

"If it's OK with you, I will take a hot shower. I have to get this salt off me."

"That's fine. The coffee and a sandwich should be in your cabin by the time you get back."

"Do you have any dry stuff that I can wear after my shower?"

"I'll see what I can find."

The lieutenant left the cabin. Once alone, Cynthia sat on the bunk. She wondered about Bill. He may not have made it. He may be dead. She stood up and looked at herself in the small mirror.

"Oh my god. I look terrible. Not surprising, Alexander jumped in the water when I tried to touch him."

She undressed, wrapped a towel around her, opened the cabin door, and checked both sides of the passageway before crossing and entering the shower room.

"I don't want to scandalize any more of these prude people."

The hot shower was heavenly. When she reentered her cabin, she found a cup of coffee, cream, sugar, and a sandwich on the table next to the bunk. Nicely folded, there were a small khaki shirt and shorts on the bunk. The coffee was nice and warm. She drank slowly and enjoyed her chicken sandwich. She looked in the mirror.

"I'm a disaster."

She was wondering whether to sleep a little or get dressed to meet the captain. She opted for the second option. The shorts were a little big around her waist, but they would hold in place. Even if the shirt was lengthy, it was a nice fit around her chest. She left the three top buttons unfastened and tied the tail ends of the shirt in the front. She looked in the mirror for the third time. She checked but could not find a comb or a brush. She put her hair in place with her hand.

"Well, that's as good as it's gonna get today!"

She grabbed the radio and called the deck.

"This is Lieutenant Gosselin. Do you need something?"

"I'm fine, Lieutenant. I'm ready to meet with the captain."

"We will come and get you in a minute."

"Thank you."

Less than a minute later, Seaman Alexander knocked at the cabin door. Cynthia opened the door and was a little saddened not to be escorted by the young officer.

"I'm here to guide you to the galley. You will meet the captain, ma'am."

"Thank you, you are Alexander, right? You're the one I pushed in the water. I can be so clumsy. Anyway, let me apologize one more time."

"No problem, ma'am. No harm done. This way, ma'am."

Cynthia followed him. The captain was seated behind the table. With a gesture, he invited her to sit across from him. Lieutenant Gosselin was leaning on what seemed to be the food counter.

"Captain, this is Cynthia Faherty. Ms. Faherty, this is Captain Conway."

"Nice to meet you, sir. Thank you for saving me."

"It's quite OK," said the captain. "That's what we do."

At first sight, Cynthia did not like this man. He seemed arrogant and condescending. He did not smile when he greeted her. In appearance and attitude, he appeared like a teacher she used to have. They would be about the same age, fifty-five or so and stiff as a maple tree. She did not trust that kind of man.

"I obviously have a few questions for you," said the captain. "Please try to answer as precisely as possible. The lieutenant reported to me the information you gave him and our duty is now to try to find your sailboat and its captain if he's still alive."

"Thank you, sir. I truly hope Bill is alive."

"Tell me about the boat you were on. What size, what color, and what kind was it?"

"It was a white Jeanneau, 47 feet with only one mast."

"One of those French sloops! Hum..."

"It was a very good boat."

"Well, that's a question of opinion. Before I ask more questions, give me a summary of what happened to your boat and its crew."

The captain sat closer to the table, holding a pencil in his right hand, ready to write his notes on the yellow pad.

"Well, let's see. Bill and I have been planning this sailboat trip around the world for a few months."

"Bill who?" said the captain. "What's his full name?"

"Bill Morrison."

"Continue."

"Everything was ready. We left Florida on Monday."

"What Monday?"

"Monday this week. A few days ago!"

"From what inlet did you leave Florida?"

"We left from Cape Canaveral Inlet. The first day, we sailed all the way to Fort Pierce. The next day, on Tuesday, we stayed at Lake Worth. We were anchored there until 12:00 at night. I'm not quite sure at what time we picked up anchor, but I know we were at sea at 1:00 a.m."

"That would be Wednesday, April 12?" asked the captain.

"Yes, that's right. A bit later we were in the middle of a storm. Bill called it a..."

"Do you mean a squall?"

"Yes, that's what he called it. I call it a storm!"

Cynthia paused a little as Captain Conway stared at her patiently. Lieutenant Gosselin, still standing by the counter, was casually looking outside.

"Then what?" asked the captain.

"Well, we made it through the storm without too much problem, except that Bill fell in the water when he was trying to tie the dinghy better."

"Is that the last time you saw him?" asked Lieutenant Gosselin.

"I will ask the questions," said the captain.

"Yes, sir," answered the officer.

"Well, young lady, answer the question!"

"No, he came back on board."

"How did he get back on board?"

"I don't know. I was trying to steer the boat straight forward and I couldn't do it. So he lost balance. I guess he grabbed a rope or

something to pull himself back. Anyway, we got out of the storm and all was fine. We were both very wet. We changed into something dry and warmer.”

Cynthia was getting noticeably nervous and agitated. To recall those incidents in the face of that man who seemed to show no sympathy whatsoever was difficult for her. She started crying.

“Do you need to take a rest?” asked the lieutenant.

The captain gave him an objectionable look.

“No, I’m OK. Well, that’s about when we got hit by this big enormous wave. The boat was almost out of control, but Bill managed, I don’t know how, to steer the boat over the wave. It was so scary. I couldn’t believe it. All this water, about 100 feet high, rushing toward us.”

“How high?”

“I don’t know! I didn’t have time to measure it. It was very high!”

“What did you do?”

“I was on the floor. I was crying and shouting. I was so scared!”

“You, Bill, and the boat survived the wave, as you call it?”

“Yes, until the second big wave came.”

“A second big wave?” asked the captain.

“Yes! Much bigger. Bill called it a... Tide wave.”

“Do you mean a tidal wave?”

“Yes, I think that’s what he said. Anyway, all I remember is that I was in the water all by myself...”

Cynthia was standing up, shaking, crying, and yelling... The captain just kept looking at her. The lieutenant tried to signal the captain that he should give it a rest, but he was ignored.

“It was awful,” continued Cynthia. “There, in that damn water, in the dark, all by myself.”

“So it was still night?”

“Yes, it was still night! It was so dark!”

“How did you get into the dinghy?”

“Well, I had my life jacket on. I found some cushions from the boat, and I held on to them. Later, when the sun was getting up, I saw something like a silhouette floating on the water.”

She sat down, placed her elbows on the table, and supported her head with both hands. She took a deep breath. The captain remained silent.

“I thought it was Bill,” continued Cynthia. “I yelled and called his name and started swimming as fast as I could toward him.”

“It was not him?”

“No, it was the dinghy. It took me almost all day to catch it.”

“Where did you get the food, the water, and the EPIRB?”

“They were in the dinghy. Before we left Florida, Bill filled a bag and secured it in the dinghy. I thought it was silly, but now I bless him.”

“We found you because you turned on the EPIRB,” said Lieutenant Gosselin.

The captain ignored the remark and continued, “So you have no idea where your Captain Bill could be?”

“No, I do not,” said Cynthia, showing a sign of impatience. “Should we not be looking for him?”

“We are. We have been strolling up and down, with full radar activity, since you are on board,” said the lieutenant. “We also activated air research and contacted all boats in a parameter of 50 miles. We are asking them to keep an eye for a damaged sailboat or for anything floating at sea.”

“Thank you for that!”

“If it’s still floating, we will find it.”

“What if the boat is gone and Bill is floating somewhere out there. Can you find him?”

The captain made a sign toward Gosselin and said: "Shouldn't you be out there with the boys to help them look?"

"Yes, sir," said the officer. He left the galley.

"Well, young lady, look at me. I have something to tell you. I listened to your story very carefully. It does not make any sense."

Cynthia stood up, punched the table, and screamed, "What do you mean? My story does not make any sense? Didn't you see the damn storm and those 'what-you-may-call-it' waves?"

"Calm down, young lady. Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, I was right here on this ocean. We had a squall two nights ago, but it was nothing major."

"And what about the waves? Didn't you see or hear about the waves?"

"No! There were no such waves. No tidal wave."

"They were there. I saw them! I lived them. They turned our boat upside down!"

The captain stood up and said, "You are in a state of hysteria. I will have somebody take you to your cabin. We will resume this conversation later. Meanwhile, I will check with our meteorological department to find out about the weather on Wednesday morning."

"You will see! I'm not crazy! I was there!"

"Oh, before you leave," asked the captain. "Did you carry any illegal drugs on your boat?"

"No, we did not. Who do you think we are? Drug dealers?"

The captain left the galley. Lieutenant Gosselin walked in without delay and said: "Follow me, Cynthia. Can I call you Cynthia?"

"Yes, I hate this man. That captain of yours is a horrible little man!"

"Well, he is rough, but he is a good sailor. Come with me. I will take you to your cabin. Have a nap. You will feel better."

"Can I have another cup of coffee?"

"Sure, no problem. What would you like in it?"

"A little cream and sugar, please."

She calmed down a little but was still crying. He poured a cup of still warm coffee, prepared it as per her request, and guided her to her quarters.

“We will do all we can to find your captain. If he is somewhere floating on this ocean, we will find him.”

He walked away and left her alone. She sat on the bed, cried a little more, had some coffee, lay down, and went to sleep.

Chapter 10

Yesterday or After: Cocoa Village Marina

Two days later, at the Cocoa Village Marina, the dock master Ken Barkley was reading the morning paper, listening to the large screen TV, and having his second cup of coffee. On this beautiful, sunny Saturday morning, he was prepared for a busy day. Many boaters were already on the dock working on their boat or getting ready to go out on the water. He was hoping that many transients would dock at the marina at the end of the day. There were quite a few rental slips available and the marina needed money.

Around 10:00 a.m., two men, in Coast Guard uniform, entered the clubhouse. Ken stood up and greeted them.

"Good morning, gentlemen! How can I help you?"

"We would like to speak to the owner or manager," said one of the men. "Is he here?"

"I'm the manager and dock master. My name is Ken Barkley."

"I'm Lieutenant Commander Charles Hoover with the department of investigation of the US Coast Guard."

The second man said: "I'm Lieutenant Peter Whiter."

"Nice to meet you both," said Ken.

Ken strolled behind the office counter. The two men followed him and stood in front of the counter. The lieutenant opened a portfolio and pulled out a photo. He presented the image to Ken.

"Do you know this person?"

"Yes, I do," said Ken after looking at the photo. "She is Captain Bill's friend. They both left this marina last Monday for a sailing trip around the world. Is she in trouble?"

"You could say that," said the lieutenant commander. "She claims their boat sank last Wednesday in the middle of the night. We found her floating in an inflatable on Thursday morning."

"What about Bill and the boat?" asked Ken very concerned.

"We don't know. We activated Search and Rescue. We searched the area by air and by sea. Nothing, no sign of the boat and no sign of a wreck or debris at sea."

"Do you have a picture or a description of the boat?" asked the lieutenant.

"Well, let's see! I don't think I have a picture of the boat, but I have the name of Bill's insurance company. We insist that all resident boats be insured. The insurance company must have a picture on file!"

Ken turned his back on the Coast Guard officers and faced his computer. "Let's see what I can find."

"Thank you," said one of the officers.

"I can't believe it," said Ken. "Just a few days ago they were standing here talking with me. Bill's a great sailor. He was one of our best racers."

"So you knew him well?" asked the lieutenant.

"Sure did!" replied Ken while searching for the information on his computer.

"What about her?" asked the lieutenant commander. "Did you know her well?"

"I got it!" said Ken. "Do you want me to print a copy?"

"That would be great, thank you," replied the lieutenant.

"What about her? Did you know her well?"

"I can't say that I did. Bill brought her here five or six months ago and introduced her. She was here quite often. She was all right! Many of our members thought she was a little trampy, especially the wives, but overall, she was tolerable!"

He handed the insurance document to the officers.

"Hope this will help you."

"It will!" said Lieutenant Commander Hoover. "Can we sit down at one of these tables? I have more questions for you."

“Sure thing. Take the table of your choice.”

The officers walked toward the largest table surrounded by six chairs. A man and a woman entered the clubhouse.

“Good morning, Ken,” said the short man. “Do you have any fresh coffee this morning?”

“Henry forgot to bring the coffee last night. We have no coffee on board!” said the skinny little woman.

“We have coffee, Pauline! You know where it is. Would you gentlemen also like some coffee?”

“No thanks,” said one of the officers.

Henry looked toward the two men and said, “What did you do, Ken? Did somebody pee in the basin again?”

“No,” said Ken. “It’s much more important.”

“Whatever the problem is, Ken, I’m a lawyer. I can help you. But it’s gonna cost you! Ah, Ah.”

“Quiet, Henry,” said Pauline. “This looks official. Ken is not smiling at all. What’s going on, Ken?”

“Captain Bill and his boat have disappeared on the way to the Bahamas. They found Cynthia alive in the dinghy.”

“Oh my god,” said Pauline. “Is that true?”

She was staring and slowly walking toward the officers.

“That’s impossible. Captain Bill is one of our best sailors. We all love him!”

“Especially you,” said Henry. “When did that happen?”

The first officer stood up and faced Henry and Pauline.

“We have no answers at this moment. We are investigating. May I ask you to let us continue our conversation with your dock master? In fact,” he said, looking at Ken, “would it be possible to close and lock the clubhouse for a few minutes? I have a number

of questions for you, and the sooner we proceed, the sooner you can get back to your daily activities.”

“Sure,” said Ken. “Henry, if you don’t mind, take your coffee with you. I will lock the office for a while. It shouldn’t be long.”

“I think I should stay, Ken. After all I am a lawyer, and I may need to represent Bill. He would want me to. We were friends!”

“Were you officially Bill’s attorney?” asked the second officer.

“Well, no but...”

“Well, sir, if your dock master concurs, we would like you to leave the clubhouse for a few minutes.”

“I didn’t know the Coast Guard had the right to investigate. Isn’t your role to help people at sea and stop drug traffickers?” continued Henry.

“The Coast Guard has authority as a law enforcement agency. We both work for that agency,” said the lieutenant.

“I don’t have to leave the clubhouse, you know. I am a good member of this club, and I have the right to be here.”

“Don’t cause any problem, Henry!” said Ken.

“Come on, Henry,” said Pauline, grabbing her husband’s arm. “Can’t you see they don’t want us here? Ken, you will tell us everything that’s going on, won’t you? Poor Bill, such a nice man. I can’t believe he left on that trip with that girl. She had no class I tell you. No class at all!”

Pauline and Henry left the clubhouse. Ken joined the officers at the table. Lieutenant Commander Hoover said: “I am noticing something, Ken!”

“What?”

“You don’t have a great opinion of Bill’s girlfriend. The woman who just left seems to feel the same way.”

“Well, Cynthia was new here and younger than most. After his divorce, two or three years ago, Bill would come to stay on his boat, almost every weekend, by himself. We all liked him, and he was quite

popular with the ladies. Eventually, he started bringing some female companions. One weekend, he brought Cynthia."

"Did he bring any other ladies after Cynthia?" asked the lieutenant.

"Not that I know of."

"What else do you know about Cynthia?" asked the lieutenant commander.

"Not much. As I said, some of the ladies did not like her much. They did not like the way she dressed. Cynthia would wear these skimpy little bikinis on the boat or while walking around the marina. She had different ideas. Bill didn't seem to mind how she acted. After all, they were not married."

"Why do you think Bill was with her?"

"My opinion?"

"Your opinion."

"Cynthia is a water girl. She loves to be on the water more than any other women I ever met. Bill loved that about her. He always said she was a good sailor. She never got sick on board, no matter how rough it was out there. She was not a bad cook and could work in the galley in all kind of sea state. She was also sexy like hell."

"How did he meet her?"

"I really do not know."

Ken was pensive.

"One of Bill's best friends has a boat in our marina. He probably knows a lot more about Bill's and Cynthia's relationship."

"Is he here today?"

"I don't know. I can try to call him on the VHF if you want."

"Later," said the lieutenant commander. Tell me about Bill."

"Bill was a gentleman. A very nice guy."

"Why did you say 'was'?"

"Hum... I don't know. Well, OK. Bill is a very nice guy. I'm sure he is still around out there."

"What kind of work did he do?"

"Bill is retired. He used to be a military doctor. I don't know how long ago. I really don't know much more about him. He didn't talk much about himself."

"What about the boat?"

"It's great boat. You have all the information on the insurance form that I gave you."

"Was the boat in good shape?" asked the lieutenant.

"Great shape! It was a jewel. That boat was perfect. It made the envy of all the sailors in this marina."

There was a pause. The two officers looked at each other, and Ken waited for the next questions. The lieutenant commander asked: "You said earlier that Bill has a good friend in this marina. What's his name?"

"George Martin. Let me see if I can reach him on the radio."

Ken stood up and grabbed the portable VHF on the counter.

"Cocoa Village Marina calling George Martin. Come in, please."

Ken placed the call a couple of times before he received an answer.

"This is the sailing vessel 'SandySea,'" said a voice. "I don't think George is here yet. Hey... Is it true what Henry is saying about Bill?"

"Seems to be true," replied Ken. "We will talk about it later. Over and out. I have his cell phone number in the file. Let me try him on the phone."

"Thank you," said one of the men.

Ken searched his folder and dialed the number. "Hello, this is George."

"George, this is Ken at the marina."

"How are you, Ken?"

"George, we have a problem here and we need your help. It concerns Bill. Where are you now?"

"I'm in my car. About ten minutes from the marina. What's going on?"

"Bill has disappeared at sea. Two men from the Coast Guard are here asking questions. They would like to talk to you."

"I'm on my way."

Within ten minutes, George was at the door. A few other sailors were on the balcony seeking information. Ken let George in, told the people he would talk to them in a short while, and relocked the door.

"George, these guys are from the Coast Guard."

"I'm Lieutenant Commander Hoover and this is Lieutenant Whiter."

"What happened to Bill? Is he all right?"

The first officer told him what he knew and kept going with the following questions while the second officer took notes, "So I'm told you knew Bill Morrison very well."

"We were good friends."

"What do you know about his life?"

"Well, he used to be a marine. He was a doctor. To make a long story short, they sent him to Nicaragua and somehow he got in trouble with his commanding officer. He refused to fight or kill anyone. He said that his profession was to save life, not destroy it. Anyways, they sent him back to the States. The court martial gave him a dishonorable discharge and managed to cancel his right to officially practice medicine."

"So what did he do?"

"He practiced preventive medicine. He was the nicest guy. If you had a medical problem, he would be there to help. For him, it was never a question of money."

"How did he earn his living?"

"Well, most people paid him when he did something for them. I also know that after his divorce, he sold his father's farm. It was somewhere upstate New York. He also sold most everything else he had. He wanted to retire on his boat and travel around the world."

"How much money do you think he had?"

"I really don't know. He must be financially secure. He always bought everything he wanted to buy."

"Do you know where he kept his money? What bank?"

"No."

"Do you know if he has a lawyer?"

"No."

"Do you know the name and whereabouts of the woman he divorced?"

"I do not. However, I know she's some kind of military brat. Her father was big brass. When Bill got discharged, they turned their back on him. It was the main cause of the problems with his ex-wife."

"Do you know her name?"

"No."

"What do you know about Cynthia?"

"She's a tramp. A sexy tramp, but a tramp."

"I assume you do not like her."

"Well, I would sleep with her once or twice, but that's about it. She used to be dancer in some men's club."

"Is that where Bill met her?"

"No, Bill did not patronize these sorts of places. He's a classy guy. He likes classy stuff—music, books, food. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, I know what you mean. How did he meet her?"

"Interesting story. After his divorce, Bill kept very much to himself. He had women friends but nothing ever lasted too long. I once asked him, 'How do you scare away all these women?' He replied, 'They don't like sailing.' Anyway, I helped him. We placed an ad on the Internet that said something like: Man, in his young

fifties, looking for a female sailor wanting to visit the world on a sailboat."

"Did he have many replies?"

"Tons, I tell you, tons. We eliminated a bunch of postulants on the Internet and met with about ten of them."

"Were you there when he met them?"

"Not all of them but in most cases, yes."

"Were you there when he met Cynthia?"

"No, he called me one day and said he had found his girl."

"When did you first meet her?"

"A couple of weeks later. Bill said he liked her and could help her. He thought she was a fair sailor and that they should travel well together."

"Did you think she was an experienced sailor?" asked Lieutenant Whiter.

"Yes, not bad at all. She once told me that she was raised on a sailboat by her father. She ran away at sixteen."

"So are you guys still searching for Bill?" asked Ken.

"Yes, we are still patrolling the area where we think he should be. Air patrol and the Bahamian Coast Guards are also looking for him, for the boat or debris of the boat."

"What happened to Cynthia?" asked George.

"She is under arrest."

"Why?" said Ken.

"Well, she told a long story to the captain of the boat who rescued her. Nobody believed her. When they brought her ashore, she had no way to establish her citizenship. She refused to answer questions and told everybody to go to play with themselves."

"That sounds like her!" said George.

"A lady officer from the immigration office tried to get the truth out of her. Cynthia pushed her, punched her, and tried to run away. They caught up with her at the exit door. She gave the guards quite a fight. I'm told they had to put her under restrain. She was placed under arrest."

Ken and George looked at each other.

“Wow,” said Ken. “I almost feel sorry for her. You guys will keep looking for Bill and keep us posted, won’t you?”

“We will,” said the first officer.

“George, shouldn’t we try to help Cynthia?” asked Ken.

“Let her rot,” said George. “That is all that she deserves.”

Part II

Chapter 11

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Second Spiritual Contact

Twenty-four months later, somewhere east of the coast of Florida and west of the Bahamas, a sailboat was drifting on the Atlantic Ocean. The boat was sad to see. It had a broken mast, top half resting on the sea. Shrouds, stays, halyard, and lines were covering the deck. The stainless steel, surrounding the vessel and supporting the bimini, the davits and the pedestal were green and covered with mildew. The fiberglass had turned black and green. The bimini and the sail's covers had lost their brightness. The hull was dirty and sluggish. The name of the boat could still be read: SeaLove.

Bill was literally having an out-of-body experience. He was hovering above the sailboat, surrounded by an enveloping bright light. He could identify his body lying down on the cockpit floor. The body he was looking at was in a repulsive condition—long white hair, long beard, filthy, and sordid. All of a sudden, Bill found himself back in his body. He opened his eyes. At first, he had no idea of his whereabouts. He raised the upper part of his body and glanced around. He was weak and dizzy. He remembered—he was on his boat. He sat on the cockpit floor and could not believe what he saw.

“I wonder what happened here.”

He tried to raise himself from the floor. He felt almost paralyzed. He managed to reach the port seat. His heart was beating extremely fast. He could feel every beat in his head and each beat brought him extreme pain.

“I’ m like a time bomb! I’m going to blow up!”

He stretched his hands toward his head. Halfway up, he stopped. His hands encountered long hair hanging down from his face. He explored his face and his head. Not only did he have a long beard but also his hair almost reached mid-back. It was sticky and filthy. He looked at his hands. They were covered with disgusting substances. His long grimy nails were definitely appalling.

Bill tried to get up and fell back on the seat. He closed his eyes and tried to understand what was happening to him or better, what had happened to him. A major cramp, coming from his stomach, was symptomatic of his malnutrition. He noticed the stinking odor all around him, mostly coming from his own body. He coped through the motions of vomiting. He had nothing to throw up.

"I must do something. I'm dying here. I smell like a moribund."

It was strenuous and exhausting, but he managed to stand up and get out of his soiled clothing. He stood in the cockpit totally naked. He looked down at himself. He was skin and bones. His mouth was dry. His lips were burning. His clothes on the cockpit floor were filled with excrements. He picked them up and made the gesture of throwing all that rubbish overboard.

"I can't do that!"

He disposed of the dirty clothing by placing them in the starboard lazarette.

"I must find a way to wash myself."

Slowly and very carefully, holding on everything he could find, seat, pedestal, davits, Bill crawled to the swim platform. He placed his feet in the water and reached for the water hose behind the little door on the back of SeaLove. He turned the valve on the open position and was fortunate. There was still water pressure.

"I don't know how long I have been out here, but the solar panels did their job keeping the house batteries charged."

After rinsing his body, Bill reached for the bottle of Joy soap, kept behind him in the shower hose cabinet, next to the water faucet. About twenty minutes later, he felt almost clean. He remained on the swim platform for about one hour. He surveyed the horizon and the skies. It was a bright covered day. The sea was calm with small swells. The wind was merely a breeze coming from the southeast. Bill determined the approximate time by the placement of the sun.

“Must be almost noon,” he said to himself.

With much efforts and awkwardness, he left the swim platform and returned to the cockpit.

“I must drink and eat something. I have to go down in the galley.”

As dizzy and unstable as he was, he did not want to sit on those filthy seats. He practically crawled to the companionway. He kneeled to push the hatch open. The ugly green mildew was sticking to his feet, knees, and hands.

“Disgusting!”

He would never remember how he made it down the eight steps; nevertheless he was eventually standing in the galley. He opened the refrigerator door. A foul smell reached his nose. Anything that was ever fresh food in this refrigerator was now rotten. He opened the freezer compartment—same result. He couldn’t tell when the refrigeration system turned itself off, but it must have been quite a while ago.

“Well, the water in these bottles must still be good!”

Bill grabbed one bottle out of the refrigerator, closed the door as well as the freezer door, and took his bottle to the sink. He turned on the water faucet, the pressure was a little weak, but he had

water. He patiently cleaned the bottle, washed his hand, opened the bottle, and slowly drank.

Things inside the boat were all over the place. The mildew was not too bad. It was not exactly sweet smelling, but it was tolerable. Bill opened the dry food cabinet and chose a can of peaches and a couple of breakfast bars. He washed the can. His long nails made it difficult for him to operate the can opener. He sat by the table and slowly consumed his meal. After lunch, he walked around the interior of the boat and opened all of the ports. A small breeze flew through and made the atmosphere more bearable.

Feeling relatively better, Bill walked to the captain's cabin. He closed the door behind him and faced the full-length mirror fastened on the back side of the door.

"Oh my god! Look at me!"

The image reflected was not the person he remembered. He was looking at a man with long, messy white hair, long white beard, and the face! He looked down at the rest of his body. His physic was entirely different. He was so skinny. It was inconceivable.

"What happened to me? I'm repugnant. I can't look at myself anymore!"

Bill sat on the side of the bunk, cleaned and trimmed his nails. He let himself fall sideways and rolled on his back. He stared at the low ceiling of the cabin. He tried to remember to understand what had happened to him. He fell asleep. He drifted off into a trance, had a dream, and heard a voice.

"I am Life. You have been living in the spirit of Life for the last twenty-four months of your calendar. Your physical body was neglected as human neglect the earth. Your embarkation was hidden from the sight of all. Your mind has been cultured. You will awake and will no longer be concerned about the person you were. You became a superior being. You are more than a man. You are the last prophet, the last messenger. Your body is presently exhausted and tired. It will bring you great discomfort. You will suffer the pain and

torment of the air, the water, and the earth—the three elements that are in agony from the abuse of men. You are the fire that may save the world or send it to obliteration.”

Bill was experiencing an agitated and tormented sleep. The voice continued:

“You now possess knowledge, enlightenment, and wisdom. You have answers to all questions. Your words will command the forces of nature. It is imperative. You must reach the superficial fools that are leading your world. You must express the anguish the Life. You must transmit the message. Men’s constant rampage must come to an end. You will soon be in the presence of human beings. They will not believe you. They will mock you. You must find the strength, the force, and the powers to convince humanity. To demonstrate the truthfulness of who you have become, you will have the mastery of healing the unwell. The pain that you take away from others, you will ingest. You are the last messenger. If they do not comprehend, their world will be no more. Your human mind will not remember the location of your close association with us. Life’s powers will live within your subconscious. The forces of Life will guide you”

The voice became silent. Bill woke up. He remembered: The trip, Cynthia, the storm, and the waves. He recalled the first contact with the voice and the indoctrination that followed. He stood up, opened the door to the wardrobe, and covered his naked body with a white shirt and a pair of white shorts. He noticed his reflection in the mirror. It had no more importance. He was all intellect. He knew what all men should know. He put on white sandals, walked through the galley, and went up the companionway. From the cockpit, he stared at the American Coast Guard cutter slowly approaching SeaLove.

The portion of the mast in the water was on the starboard of SeaLove. The Coast Guard vessel presented its starboard side to the port side of the sailboat in distress. Two seamen, each with a

machine gun in hands, were standing on the cutter. One was near the bow, the other near the stern. The guns were pointed toward Bill. A message was sent from the cutter:

“This is Commander Parson of the United State Coast Guard. All persons aboard this vessel must assemble in the cockpit.”

“I am alone,” said Bill.

“I repeat. All persons aboard this vessel must assemble in the cockpit. Do it now!”

Bill moved slowly toward the stern, raised both his arms, and restated in a loud voice: “I am the only person aboard this vessel.”

The two seamen kept their weapon aimed toward Bill. A uniformed officer came down on deck and carefully approached the starboard side of the cutter.

“I’m Lieutenant Gardner. Are you truly the only person on board your vessel?”

“These were my words,” replied Bill.

From where he was standing, Lieutenant Gardner could easily make out the incredible mess aboard SeaLove.

“May we board your vessel, Skipper?”

“You are welcome!”

The seaman standing at the stern of the cutter diligently installed a short ladder while the other seaman kept his eyes and weapon on Bill. The seaman handed his weapon to the lieutenant and carefully descended the ladder. Once on SeaLove’s deck, he retook possession of his rifle and moved aft. He pointed his weapon on Bill.

“What is your name, son?” asked Bill.

“My name is Seaman Oliver, sir.”

“You do not need to point your rifle toward me. I’m the only person on this sailboat. I will not attack you!”

"It's regulation, sir!"

"Very well if it's regulation! You are obeying orders. I do not blame you."

Bill was surprised with the tone and sound of his own voice. It was a deep voice, composed, collected, and dispassionate. During the short conversation, the second seaman had stepped on SeaLove. He was standing in the forward side of the cockpit, pointing his machine gun toward the companionway. The lieutenant also climbed down and took place on the starboard side of the cockpit. He was holding his handgun.

"Welcome aboard Lieutenant," said Bill.

"Thank you, Skipper, let me ask you again. Is there anybody else on this boat? Is there any other person or animal inside the vessel?"

"There is not, Lieutenant. You are safe."

The officer made a gesture toward the seamen standing aft of the cockpit. The young man obeyed rapidly, walked toward the companionway, and climbed down. He came out a minute or two later and said: "I looked everywhere, sir. I surveyed the salon, the galley, each of the three cabins, each of the two heads, the shower stall, and the four hanging lockers. There is nobody else on board, sir!"

"Very well."

The Lieutenant was still looking at Bill.

"Was there anybody else on board?"

"Yes, a young lady. Her name is Cynthia Faherty."

"Where is she now?"

"I assume she fell overboard when we were hit by a tidal wave."

"When did that happen?"

"What is the date today?"

"April 7."

"Then, we capsized two years ago."

"You capsized two years ago, you said where?"

"What is our present latitude/longitude?" asked Bill.

The lieutenant took his portable VHF radio and called his captain.

"Sir, what is our present position?"

"Latitude 27, 20, 47 and longitude 79, 20, 52. Why?" asked the voice.

"Well, this guy is giving me a story, and I'm trying to make some sense of it."

"Very well. Does everything look right on the boat?" asked the captain.

"It's a mess," replied the lieutenant. "The skipper is the only person on board, and he doesn't make much sense."

"Very well! Finish your investigation and bring everybody on board the cutter, including the skipper."

"I will, sir!"

The young officer looked at Bill.

"Did you hear what the captain said?"

"I did!"

"Well, then, how far from here did you capsized?"

"Right here!"

"You capsized right here, at this latitude/longitude? It's impossible! If you capsized here two years ago, the gulfstream would have taken you miles north of here."

"Many things that seem impossible are possible, Lieutenant Gardner."

Showing irritability, Lieutenant Gardner asked, "What is your name, Skipper?"

"My name is Captain Bill Morison. I am the last prophet."

Chapter 12

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill and the Coast Guards

Commander Parson was leaning back on his chair. From the salon of the cutter, he had a good view over the deck and at SeaLove that they were slowly pulling to port. It had taken a few hours for the seamen to clean up the mess around SeaLove. The half of the mast, the stays, and the halyards which were in the water were pulled and tied on the sailboat's deck. One of the crewmen had taken all papers and documents out of SeaLove.

Sitting across the table, Bill was observing the commander. One of the young seamen was guarding the door. His eyes were focused on Bill.

"You don't need a guard," commented Bill. "I'm not going anywhere."

"It's regulation."

Commander Parson looked down at his papers.

"Well, your story is short and sweet. You are the last prophet, and you want to meet with the leaders of the world at the United Nations building in New York."

"That is my request," said Bill.

The commander placed the file taken from SeaLove on the table. He pulled out a few documents, including Bill's and Cynthia's passports. Looking at Bill's passport, the commander added:

"Let's see. It says here that you are Dr. William T. Morrison. In this picture, you seem a little younger. This is your passport, is it not?"

"Yes it is," replied Bill, showing no reactions.

"So you are William T. Morrison?"

"I am."

The commander raised the second passport.

"Now, this other passport belongs to a lady by the name of Cynthia Faherty. Was she on the boat with you?"

"She was."

"Where is she now?"

"I do not know. She's alive."

"If you don't know where she is, how do you know she's alive?"

"I perceive that she is alive."

"I see, hum... when did you last see her?"

"Two years ago."

"What happened? How did you lose her?"

"We sailed through a storm. We were hit by two subsequent tidal waves. I lost control of the boat."

"How did you manage to survive?"

"I held on to the wheel. When the boat took back its rightful position, I was still on board."

"And Cynthia?"

"I looked everywhere for her. I could not find her."

"And then?"

"I fell asleep. I had a long dream. Based on today's date, it all happened two years ago!"

"You had a dream?" asked the commander with a skeptical facial expression. If your boat had been drifting on this ocean for two years, we would have found it a long time ago. Your story doesn't make any sense. Why don't you tell me the truth?"

"I have answered your questions with correctness. You may not doubt my integrity and the accuracy of my report."

Showing much annoyance, the commander raised his voice: "Who do you think you are? Are you totally mad? What arrogance! Of course, I doubt your integrity as you say. I think you are a sick man or you are trying to pull a fast one."

"Your opinion belongs to you, Commander. I will no longer answer any questions until I meet with your superiors."

The commander stood up scrutinizing Bill and demonstrating impatience and irritation. Bill remained in his seat, manifesting calmness and perfect composure. The officer bent down toward Bill: "Look, you! Before I lock you up, would you answer two more questions?"

"If you are respectful, I shall answer two additional questions."

"Are you a drug dealer?"

"I believe in good state of mind and health for all creature of life. How could I be a drug dealer?"

"We will search your boat. Will we find illegal drugs?"

"If no one has placed illegal drugs in the boat you are now towing, you will not find any."

"All right, Mr. Prophet. I can't believe a word you say. You are under arrest. You will be confined until you are transferred to Maritime Homeland Security in our Cape Canaveral Station. Seaman Clark, take him away."

Bill stood up, looked at the commander, and turned his eyes toward the young man. He smiled and said softly: "*Semper Paratus*, the Coast Guard motto, young man. Always ready. I hold no bitterness against you or your commander. He does what he must do. My new existence defies his level of comprehension and probably his mental readiness to accept the presence of who I have become. Prophets were never acknowledged and accepted in the world of men. Most were put to death before humanity believed in their existence. Remember Jesus?"

Seaman Clark took a few steps back while saying: "Yes, I do, sir. I believe in Jesus."

"Not one more word out of you, Clark. Take him away. I'm not a religious man, but the Jesus you mentioned made miracles! Did he not?"

Bill walked through the door in front of Seaman Clark. He turned and faced Commander Parson, who was still standing behind the table: "Commander, do you not believe in miracles?"

"No, I do not!"

"How do you call the creation of life? The birth of a child?"

"I ask the questions around here, Mr. Morrison, not you."

"Commander, in this beautiful day at sea, would you like to witness a small phenomenon of nature. Something you may call a miracle?"

The commander left his position and walked toward the deck.

"What are you talking about?"

"If you allow me, Commander, let's walk to the front of your cutter."

"And why would we do that? Do you intend to jump?"

"Of course not, Commander. I will not leave this boat until we have reached our destination."

"You can proceed to the front of the boat. Seaman Clark, stay with him and keep an eye on him."

Bill leisurely moved toward the bow. The young man followed closely while the commander stood at the door of the salon. Lieutenant Garner was observing from the upper deck. The other seaman was standing behind the helm. Bill stopped once he reached the port front stanchion. He surveyed the ocean for a minute. He raised his right arm, extended his right index finger, and pointed toward the horizon at the point, where the skies touch the seas. All persons on board focused in the direction shown by Bill. They could not believe what they witnessed.

First, there was a dark spot on the surface of the water followed by a spiral pattern leading to a water spray ring and developing into visible condensation. The waterspout formed an almost straight line between the ocean and the clouds. Growing rapidly in size, power,

and forward motion, the powerful water tornado was on a collision course with the Coast Guard cutter.

“What the hell!” said the commander.

He and the others stood in position, eyes fixed on the waterspout rapidly approaching the vessel.

“Stop it, damn you!” said the commander while running to the front of the boat; his gun in hand.

“Stop now or I’ll shoot you!”

Bill let the waterspout approach within 2000 feet of the cutter. He calmly and gradually lowered his right arm. The waterspout toned down, washed out, and dissolved. Bill turned toward the commander: “Sir, if you had shot me, who would have stopped the waterspout?”

“I don’t know how you created this illusion, you, you, mad man. You are under arrest. Seaman Clark, handcuff this man and lock him up immediately.”

Totally exhausted by the origination and eradication of the waterspout, Bill almost collapsed. He managed to stand up and willingly placed his arms behind his back. Always with a smile, he looked at Commander Parson and said, “What you saw, Commander was not an illusion. It was a genuine demonstration of the forces of nature. It could have destroyed your boat. You may not comprehend what you observed, but you should be aware. Forces beyond your understanding can be activated and challenge your world.”

Without showing the turmoil in his body, Bill asked: “Seaman Clark, would you please take me to my quarters. I must rest. I would appreciate something to eat and drink.”

“May I get him something to eat, Commander?” asked the young man.

“Yes, get this man away from me.”

The seaman added:

"Please walk in front of me, sir. Go down these steps on your left."

Bill did as he was asked. Once he was confined, Seaman Clark said: "I will remove your handcuffs even if I am not supposed to. I'll get you some food. Can I ask you something?"

"You may ask."

"How did you do that trick? Are you a magician?"

"Your heart is good, Seaman Clark. Have faith because only faith can save this world. If you don't mind, I need to rest and be by myself."

"Are you really a prophet?"

"I am the last prophet."

Seaman Clark left and locked the door behind him. Bill let his body collapse on the hard bunk and whispered: "They do not know the dangers facing the world. Few are prepared for the overwhelming surprises. If I cannot convince them, will they all drown in apocalyptic floods, be seared by an angry sun, or be walloped by a distant planet."

A few minutes later, the whole crew was on the command bridge. The boat was on autopilot. The four seamen were debating the events of the day.

"I believe," said the commander, "that we were all subjected to an illusion of high standard. The guy is good. A damn good illusionist."

"This was more than an illusion," said Lieutenant Gardner.

"We all saw the waterspout!"

"Well," replied the commander. "It's like magic! What is the name of the magician who makes elephant disappear?"

"David Copperfield," answered one of the seamen.

"That's it! This guy is like David Copperfield! Probably less known but better. Now, here is what we should do. We are going to ignore this little show he gave us. I am not going to mention

this event in my report. I'm asking you ignore the incident. It did not happen. Nobody would believe us anyway."

"As you wish, sir," replied Lieutenant Gardner and Seaman Oliver.

Unnoticed by Commander Parson, Seaman Clark did not answer.

Chapter 13

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill and the Investigators

Bill was taken off the cutter with both hands tied behind his back. He looked behind to see if SeaLove was still in to; she was not. He would have liked to look at her one more time. Lieutenant Gardner and one of the young seamen were behind him. Two other armed seamen were waiting on the dock. Bill turned his head toward Lieutenant Gardner and asked: "What happened to my sailboat? Could you please tell me?"

"As we came up the inlet, a towboat took charge of her."

"What will they do with her?"

"Well, they will surely search every nook and cranny. If you had illegal substances on board, they will find them."

"I had nothing illegal unless my dreams and memories are illegal."

"I understand," said Gardner. "You must now get off our boat, sir."

Bill took a long step to finally land on the dock. He was back in Cape Canaveral, Florida. Two years ago, he left this inlet for a long trip to fulfill a dream. He was back. He was sad. His eyes glanced toward the east side of the inlet.

"Follow us, sir," said one of the seamen on the dock. They took place on each side of him, respectively, grabbed his right and left arms, and pushed him forward.

A few minutes later, Bill was left alone in what he figured to be a typical interrogation room. His handcuffs had been removed. The room was square, about 15 feet by 15 feet with four white walls without any decorations. On one of the wall, there was a large mirror. It was obvious to Bill. This mirror was a see-through glass and there were probably a few people standing in the next

room, looking at him, studying him. In the middle of the room, there was a wooden table and three chairs. On the ceiling, right above the table, a light fixture containing two 48" neon tubes was suspended. On the wall, next to the mirror, a large and powerful spotlight was directed at his face. Bill sat on the chair facing the table and the mirrored wall. The only door in the room was next to the mirror. Bill looked at the mirror and smiled. The door opened to let in two tall and muscular men, both in civilian suits. They walked and stood in front of the table, looking down at Bill who could hardly see their facial features. One of the men had a smiling face, the other seemed more tyrannical.

The smiling man on the left said: "I am Special Agent Jennings from the FBI." The other man added: "My name is Charles O'Donnell with the DEA."

"Gentlemen," said Bill, "what can I do for you?"

"We have a few questions for you," said Jennings.

"Commander Parson questioned me thoroughly. I gave him all the answers. Did you not read his report?"

"Look, you," said O'Donnell. "Don't try to be a smart guy. We have questions, and we want answers. Do you intend to collaborate?"

"Did you meet with Commander Parson? Did you read his report?"

"Yes, we did," replied Jennings.

"Well," said Bill very slowly, "Gentlemen, you have all the answers."

"I don't like this guy," said O'Donnell. "What do you think, Agent Jennings? Should we kick his ass a little?"

"Bill stood up," faced O'Donnell, smiled, and said, "Are you threatening me?"

"Calm down you two," said Jennings. "Mr. Morrison, please sit down."

Agent Jennings looked at O'Donnell: "O'Donnell, I don't think we can intimidate this man. Why don't you leave me alone with him? I think we can find a way to communicate. Don't you think so, Mr. Morrison?"

Bill smiled as the other man made his way out the door.

"Tell me, Agent Jennings, how many persons are watching us through this glass?"

"A few! They are all interested by your story. Why won't you answer my questions?"

"Simple, I already told everything I know and remember to Commander Parson."

"Mr. Morison, if you tell me your story again, we may find something new. A little point that could help us understand what actually happened to you."

"Then, let me reveal my story one more time and without interruption."

"We can do that. Would you like some water? Or coffee maybe?"

"I would appreciate some cold water."

Before Bill could end his request, the door opened. A young man brought him a bottle of water.

"That's what we can call quick service," said Bill. He drank a little water and said, "Are you ready to listen?"

"I am."

"Please take good notes. I will tell you all that I know and can recall."

"I am listening, sir."

"My name is William Morrison. I used to be a United States Marine and a medical doctor. I was dishonorably discharged from the Marines for refusing to fight in Nicaragua. I also lost my right to practice medicine. From California, I moved to Florida, where I practiced alternative medicine for a few years. My discharge and my move to Florida led to my divorce with my ex-wife."

“What was her name? Where does she live now?”

“This is irrelevant to my story. Did we not agree there would be no interruption?”

“You are right. I’m sorry,” said Jennings.

“I inherited a family property, sold it, and bought the sailboat I really wanted. My dream was to sail around the world. I prepared the boat, found a sailing mate by the name of Cynthia Faherty. We left Florida two years ago. In fact, we left from Cape Canaveral Inlet. A few days later, we engaged the Gulfstream from Lake Worth, heading east, toward the Bahamas. A few hours into the trip, we faced a major tropical storm. After the storm, we were challenged by two subsequent tidal waves. We capsized during the second wave. From this point on, I remember that I was surrounded by a deep white light. I recall looking down at my body resting on the cockpit floor of SeaLove. I woke up. Looking tired, skinny, and older with long white hair and a long white beard. Physically weaker but mentally reinforced.”

“I now owned intense knowledge with a clear path toward my destiny and the destiny of mankind. I do not know what has happened to me. But I feel and detect a powerful influence within me. What is the meaning, the significance, and the essence of what or who I became? Only the Creator knows. A force within me, greater than my mind, coerces me and leads me. I should have died at sea. Instead I grew into a man of knowledge. I have powers unknown to men. A voice in my soul tells me that I am the last prophet.”

Bill became silent. Agent Jennings waited a minute, then asked: “Tell me, Bill. Do you think that, maybe, you were in some kind of a coma?”

“Agent Jennings, I was and still am a medical doctor. No medical history in the world can establish that a comatose man can live for two years without being fed and taken care of. I was not in a coma.”

"How did you survive?"

"The answer to that question, I do not know. I can only believe that a spiritual force, bigger than men, took possession of my body and soul to prepare me for what I need to do."

"What do you need to do?"

"I must convey Life's message. I am the last prophet. I am the last messenger. If I fail, this world will be no more."

"How do you intend to convey your message?"

"I must meet with the governments of this world. There must be a special conference at the United Nations building in New York. They must listen to me. They have to hear what I must say."

"Can you tell me the message?"

"I am conscious that our world is in grave danger. The essence of life inhabits my soul. Life will express its will through my voice when the time and the place is right."

"So, Mr. Morrison. You believe, or want us to believe, that a force you call Life has captured you, indoctrinated you, and released you back onto your boat so that you could save the world. Is that what I should understand?"

Bill stared at Jennings. They both remained silent for a short while. "Agent Jennings, I know that you, and the persons listening to this conversation on the other side of the mirror, cannot understand, comprehend, and accept my rendition of what happened to me. How can I expect you to understand? I, myself, do not understand."

"Is there anything else you can say, or do, to help us understand?"

"To all who can hear my voice, let me say this—you must believe, you must have faith, you must help me. Or the world, as you know it, will no longer be."

"I do not know what to think. I will leave you alone for a while and have a talk with my colleague. I will be back."

"I will be here. By the way, tell the psychiatrist on the other side of the wall that I am not completely mad."

"How did you know we had a psychiatrist over there?"

"I know," said Bill with a smile. "I also know what he has in mind for me. Before you leave, can I ask you, if you know, what happened to Cynthia Faherty?"

"Don't you think she died at sea when your boat capsized?"

"I know she survived. I do not know where she is."

"How do you know she survived?"

"The same way I knew there was a psychiatrist on the other side of the wall."

"Well, you are right. She's alive. She's in jail."

"Why was she arrested?"

"Well, first we thought she could have been responsible for your disappearance. When they questioned her, she became violent and even hit a female officer. She was taken to court and told the judge to go masturbate himself. They gave her three years."

"That's Cynthia, all right! I will set her free."

"You need to help yourself first, my friend. You may have troubles of your own."

Jennings left the room and was immediately replaced by O'Donnell.

"Well, well... We can see through walls and mirrors, can we?"

"Welcome back, Agent O'Donnell. Did you find any illegal drugs in my boat?"

"Morrison, I will ask the questions, and you better answer."

"I will not talk to you, Agent O'Donnell. Do not waste your time threatening me or bullying me."

"All right, take this attitude and see where it's going to lead you."

O'Donnell left the room. Bill was left by himself for a few hours. The big spotlight was off. The only light in the room came from the neon above the table. A lady, dressed in white, entered

the room. She was carrying a food tray. She looked at Bill with a kind smile.

“Hungry, Mr. Morrison?”

“You are right, Pauline, I am very hungry. Thank you.”

“How did you know my name?”

“Very easy. There is a tag on you—‘Pauline.’ Pauline must be your name.”

Blushing a little, Pauline replied: “How silly of me. I forgot about the tag. I have a large bowl of good vegetable soup for you, some bread, and a hot cup of tea.”

“Fantastic. Thank you.”

Bill bent down and brought his nose over each food container.

“What are you doing, Mr. Morrison?”

“I am making sure the good people on the other side of the glass did not put any strange chemicals in the food.”

“Mr. Morrison, why? We would never do that!”

“No, you are right. There are no chemicals in the food but...”

“But?”

“There are some in the tea. Hope you won’t mind if I do not drink the tea,” said Bill, looking into the mirror.

“Mr. Morrison, there is no chemical in the tea. I swear I would not do that. I am a registered nurse.”

“I believe you, Pauline. However, the people on the other side of the mirror are not registered nurses. They would do anything to get their way. They fooled you and tried to fool me.”

Looking again at the mirror, Bill added: “Anyway, folks, thanks for the food.”

“I’ll get you another cup of tea,” said Pauline. “I will prepare it myself.”

“Thank you, Pauline.”

The young lady left the room. While Bill was eating his meal, she came back into the room with a new cup of tea. She placed it on the table and turned to leave the room without saying anything.

“Pauline?”

“Yes, sir?”

“May I hold your hands?”

“Why?”

“Please oblige an old man. I may heal the cancer that is afflicting your heart, body, and soul.”

“How do you know I have cancer?”

“You have breast cancer.”

“Well, yes, but how did you know?”

“Let me hold your hands.”

Bill stood up. Pauline placed her hands in his. The onlookers witnessed Bill entering into trance. They saw his body tremble, his face turn to red and blue, and tears fall from his eyes. Pauline reacted as if an electrical shock had entered her body. They both fell to the floor. Bill released her hands.

The guards entered the room and pulled Pauline away from Bill.

“Wait, wait,” she pleaded. “Mr. Morrison, what have you done?”

Bill regained his composure and carefully returned to his chair.

“Because of your kindness toward me, you are healed. Visit your doctors as soon as you can. They will confirm that you no longer have breast cancer. By the way, do not take any more of the medicine they are giving you.”

The guards forced Pauline out of the room. She was screaming: “Thank you. Thank you...”

After drinking his tea, Bill placed his arms on the table and rested his head on his arms. He was almost asleep when another

person came into the room. Bill raised his head to look at a short, older man in a dark gray wrinkled suit, gray tie, and white shirt.

"I did not mean to wake you up, Mr. Morrison, I..."

"Of course you did. It's your turn to torment me, Doctor."

"I have no intention of tormenting you," said the man while sitting in front of Bill. "I'm Doctor Paterson."

"And you are a psychiatrist?"

"Yes, I am."

"It is your job to prove I am totally insane."

"Are you insane, Mr. Morison? Can I call you Bill?"

"You sure can. Can I call you Paul?"

"You knew my first name was Paul?"

"In fact, it's really Paul Henry! However, you don't like to be called Paul Henry. Only your mother called you this way, especially when she was upset with you. Your wife also calls you Paul Henry. She uses her sharp little voice that you really dislike... 'Paul Henry... do this...' 'Paul Henry... do that...'"

"You are an interesting case, Bill. How do you know these things?"

"I am not trying to amaze you, Paul Henry. I am not your regular type of patient. I am not a crazy man. I am not insane. I am not delusional!"

"Then, what do you think you are, Bill?"

"I am what I am. I am the last prophet. I am the last messenger."

"You keep saying these things, and I will not be able to set you free."

"Well, my dear Paul Henry, you must lock me up. But I know my rights. You cannot lock me up for good until I get my day in court. Only a judge can decide either I should be locked up or set free."

Bill faced the mirror one more time. "Therefore, I am requesting my day in court."

"How did you know Pauline was afflicted with cancer?"

“Her soul told mine.”

Doctor Paterson stood up, looked at Bill, and said, “I do not know what I can do for you, Bill. I will leave. Good luck.”

After Doctor Paterson left the room, Bill was escorted to a small cell with four concrete walls and no windows. A metal door was set in the front wall. The cell was furnished with one bunk bed. In the right corner, there was a little container. Bill figured this container would be his luxurious toilet. A lonely bright light was hanging from the high center of the ceiling. Bill was sitting on the lower bunk for only a few minutes when the metal door opened. A young, large man in his thirties was pushed in by a guard shouting, “Get in there!”

The man rapidly moved into the room and fell on Bill’s lap. He stood up, looked at Bill, and said: “How are you doing, old man? Which bunk do you want, the top one or the lower one?”

“I will take the upper one, if that choice meets with your agreement, Richard!”

“You know me? Anyway, call me Dick!”

“If you say so.”

Bill climbed on the top bunk, and Richard took place on the lower one. They remained silent for a few minutes. Someone turned the light off. The two men found themselves in total darkness.

“Wow,” said Richard, “its dark in here!”

“It will be easier to sleep,” replied Bill.

“I don’t like darkness.”

“You will be fine!”

“What is your name, old man?”

“Bill.”

“Why are you in here?”

“Because they do not understand me. They fear me.”

“These guys are not afraid of anything. There’s a bunch of bastards!”

"Why are you here?"

"They claim I am a drug dealer and a pervert!"

"Are you?"

"I am not a dealer. I shared a joint with a young guy on my boat. Big deal... I did not sell it to him. I just let him suck from my cigarette."

"How did they find out?"

"Well, I rented a slip for one night at the Cape Canaveral Yacht Club. The guy in the boat next to mine said he could smell pot coming out of my boat. He called the police."

"What happened?"

"The damn Coast Guard knocked on my boat, came aboard, and found the joint we were smoking. They found a few more joints and started asking questions."

"What kind of questions?"

"Well, you know. They wanted to know who the kid was and what he was doing on my boat."

"What did he say?"

"Well, you know when the Coast Guard came aboard, the kid and I were pretty well naked."

"Why were you naked?"

"What do you think old man? Just before the Coast Guard stopped our fun, I was down on him. He was almost ready to come. I was giving him fun!"

"How old was the boy?"

"I don't know, fifteen, sixteen years old."

"That's why they called you a pervert."

"The kid was cute, man. It was worth it!"

"According to the rules of society, you were doing something very wrong."

"What can be wrong? I was pleasing the kid, and I was pleasing myself. I was going to teach him how to be a good lover."

Bill remained silent for a while. "I understand why you were arrested, Richard. What you did was not exactly right."

"According to whom? I was willing, the kid was willing. He asked me to share some pot with him. I said I would, if he let me suck his dick. He wanted me to. He said he would suck mine. I didn't force him or even talk him into it."

"They are going to charge you with corruption of a minor."

"I know! I wonder what they'll do with my boat. It's not much of a boat, but I like it. It's my boat. Of course I still owe money to the bank."

"After they charge you with the crime, and if the judge sends you to jail, the bank will probably seize the boat."

"You're probably right, old man."

"So you like having sex with boys?"

"Yes, I like boys, and I like men. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't mind playing with you for a while."

"I don't think so, Richard."

"Why not? We have nothing else to do."

"I am not a homosexual, Richard."

"Homosexual, gay, women, these are only words, old man. What difference does it make? Sex is sex. In fact, with all that hair around your face, you look like a pussy. I would love you to suck my dick, man!"

"I will not do that, Richard!"

"All right, then let me climb up there and let me suck yours."

"Now, now, Richard. This is not going to happen."

"Why not? It would feel good for both of us."

"The actions you are proposing, Richard, are against the laws of nature. Homosexual relations have been condemned throughout recorded history."

"Get a life, old man. As far back as ancient Greece, men were having sex with boys and men. The Romans did the same thing. There is nothing wrong. It's all in people's squared mind."

"The New Testament states that homosexuality is evil."

“Who cares about the Old Testament?”

“Richard, the immorality of same-sex sexual relations is not only a religious issue. Homosexual activities are not only wrong because the Bible forbids it. Rather, the Bible forbids it because it is wrong. It violates natural law, which is based on reason, not faith.”

“Natural laws?”

“Natural laws are recognition of the differences between good and evil.”

“There you go! Good and evil. God and the devil. This is religious nonsense. We are talking about sex, man!”

“Richard, good fundamental sex has to do with life. Human sexuality can be recreational, but its main goal is procreative. Therefore, it is good because it is natural. The homosexual union can be recreational, but it is not procreative. It engages our sexual organs, but in a context that cannot lead to procreation.”

“I hear you, man, but when a man and a woman have sex, they don’t always do it to have babies. Most of them make it for fun. More than half of the females are on the pill.”

“It is true. However, when a man meets a woman for sexual activities, they are closer to the laws of life than a man with a man or a woman with a woman. When you have sex with a man, do you practice sodomy?”

“What the hell is that?”

“Do you enter the men’s rectum?”

“Yes, sometimes. I like it, but I like it even more when a guy with a big dick takes me. Would you like to try it?”

“No, thank you. You see, Richard, in the Bible, sodomy is a synonym for homosexuality. There shall be no whore of the daughters and no sodomite of the sons.”

“There you go with your Bible again. I don’t believe in the Bible. It’s a bunch of rules written by old man like you in order to control people.”

"Richard, homosexuality is not only against the Bible, it is against nature."

"Well, I am a homosexual. That's what I am, and there is no way out. Women totally turn me off, and my preferences go toward young boys. I would do it with you to kill some time but..."

"But?"

"You are not really my type."

"I am glad to hear that. Well, let me complete by saying that having sex with young and innocent boys is total perversion. You could spoil and destroy their natural sexual life and turn them into men like you. You have an unclean spirit, and I hope you will understand my words before you hurt more young men."

"Fuck you, old man!"

"Are a few moments of sexual pleasure with a young man or a boy worth many years in jail?"

"May be, in jail, I will have all the sex I want. Imagine, they will punish me for having sex with guys, and they will send me to prison, where the whole population is composed of men. In a way, it's almost like sending me to paradise."

"Interesting theory," said Bill. "What about the afterlife? Do you ever think about that?"

"You mean heaven or hell. Tell you what, man, I don't believe in that shit. After I'm gone, I'm gone, and that's it!"

"Well, that is not quite true, Richard. There is an afterlife!"

"Sure..."

"It's another life. It is called reincarnation."

"Nobody can be sure of that."

"In life, as we know it, Richard, nothing is ever destroyed. It is only transformed. Reincarnation means that when a person dies, his body decomposes, but something of oneself is reborn in another body."

"Bullshit, old man."

"Prepare yourself during this life for who you want to be in the next life. For the sins you commit in this life, you will be

punished in your next life. For the qualities or the talents you have developed during this life, you will benefit during your next life."

"How the hell can you believe that? You are a crazy old bastard, aren't you?"

"Think about it, Richard. Reincarnation explains child prodigies. In this case, the child comes back to life in another body and brings back with him the past talents and the past faults. If a man or woman worked hard to be a great pianist during one or more previous lives, it will be simple for him or her to learn piano and to proceed to a life of excellence in the art of playing piano."

"I repeat. It's all bullshit, old man."

"Have you ever heard of 'déjà vu'?"

"Yeah, I heard of it!"

"OK, 'déjà vu' is often a memory of past life."

"You speak like a preacher or a priest."

"I am not a preacher, and I am not a priest."

"So who or what the hell are you?"

"I am the last prophet. I will now rest, Richard. I suggest you do the same. Tomorrow may be a long day for both of us. Good night, Richard."

"Sure..."

Chapter 14

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill in Court

It was an arraignment court where a formal reading of the charges was made. Bill knew he had three possible pleas: guilty, not guilty, or no contest. He was sitting in a wooden chair placed behind a wooden table. The room was small with few people in attendance. Bill noticed, at the back of the room, a young man with long black hair and thick glasses. His head was resting on the wall, his eyes staring at the ceiling.

Bill was held in captivity for five days without being charged for anything. According to the law, he should not have been detained for more than twenty-four hours unless an officer with the rank of superintendent or magistrate gave permission. The maximum time of detention should not exceed ninety-six hours. He was sent to the Middle District Court of Florida, Orange County. During the first three days, he was interrogated and cross-examined by many law enforcement agencies including the Immigration Office, the FBI, and the Florida Department of Justice. He was also interviewed by two different psychiatrists, one psychologist and catechized by a priest. In all cases, Bill had chosen to remain mostly silent. He stayed calm, polite, and considerate with all. How could they possibly accept and understand his supernatural epic. To all direct questions, he would invite the interrogators to consult his original testimony.

"I have answered all of these questions," would say Bill. "I have no other explanation for you."

A legal representative of the district attorney, George Walker, was the last person to question and evaluate Bill. "You know, Mr. Morrison, with these kinds of answers, the court may send you to a mental institute!"

"Have no fear for my future," replied Bill. "My destiny is already written. By the way, by keeping me here, you are violating your own laws. When will I have my day in court?"

"We have the right to hold you for ninety-six hours."

"I have been arrested over five days ago. It is well over ninety-six hours."

"The time on the boat does not count."

"Yes, it does, and you know it. I will not hold your deceitful and inaccurate answer against you."

"How kind of you. Do you have a lawyer?"

"I do not, and I was never offered one. In fact, I was arrested without anyone ever reading me my rights."

"Do you wish to have an attorney?"

"No thank you. I have all the assistance I could possibly need."

"Who will help you?"

"The power that rests within my inner being."

The young attorney stood and observed Bill for a few minutes. Bill stared back with a look of kindness and added: "Do not fear. What will be must be."

"You are a peculiar person. Well, good luck. You will be in court tomorrow morning."

Before leaving the room, George Walker added: "Mr. Morrison, the clothes you were wearing when arrested have been cleaned and somebody will bring them to you. You may wish to wear your own clothes instead of the jail uniform. It will look better in court."

"I appreciate the attention, but I was wearing shorts and sandals when I was arrested."

"Would black pants and a black shirt be better for you?"

"I think so."

"I'll see what I can find something that will fit you."

"It is very kind of you."

"If you would like to take a shower, an agent can guide you to the shower room."

"Thank you. I really need to clean up."

“What about your hair and this bearded face of yours? Would you like a barber?”

“No, thank you. Have you ever seen a prophet without a bearded face?” asked Bill, smiling.

“I don’t know about prophet, Mr. Morrison. I have never seen one, and I still don’t see one when I look at you.”

“And what do you see?”

“A confused old man with a big problem.” On these words, George Walker left the room.

Bill was now in court and without the assistance of an attorney. A few more persons entered the courtroom. The prosecutor and a female assistant were sitting behind a desk on the right of Bill’s position. Precisely at ten o’clock, the judge entered the room.

“All rise,” said the clerk of the court. “The District Court of Orange County is now in session. Honorable Judge Martin Stewart presiding.”

The few observers stood up when the judge entered.

“You may all sit,” said the clerk.

Bill observed the judge, and the judge gave Bill the once-over. Judge Stewart was about sixty years old, almost bald, with white hair on each side of his head. His height and slim body gave him a certain look of elegance. Judge Stewart looked at the prosecutor and asked: “Mr. Bentley. What is your case against this gentleman?”

Prosecutor Mark Bentley raised and slowly walked toward the judge. He spoke with a strong Southern accent.

“Well, Your Honor, we have an uncommon case here. Did you have a chance to look at the documents we sent to you?”

“Yes, I did. However, I did not receive anything from the defense.”

Turning his attention toward Bill, the judge questioned, "Did you choose to appear before me without an attorney Sir?"

"Yes, Your Honor."

"The case against you is a little bizarre to say the least. I am not sure you can defend yourself. Would you like to change your mind? The court can get an attorney for you and at no cost to you."

"No, Your Honor. Thank you for your concern."

The judge observed Bill for a few seconds and added, "Very well, sir. Proceed, Mr. Bentley."

"Your Honor, the state believes Mr. Morrison is not fit to go on trial. He was in a boating accident and rescued by the US Coasts Guard. After his accident and before he was found, this man was lost at sea for about two years. He had a lady sailor with him at the time of the accident by the name of Cynthia Flaherty. She was rescued by the Coast Guard a day after their boat capsized."

Without any expression on his face, Bill was studying the manners, the gestures, and the words of the prosecutor.

"The first thing Mr. Morrison said to the seamen who saved him," continued the prosecutor, "is that he was no longer a man. He was a prophet."

The last sentence of the prosecutor was pronounced with sarcasm. He turned his whole body toward Bill and added, "In fact, he proclaimed to be the last prophet."

The young man at the back of the room lifted his head from the wall and paid more attention. He was a young journalist in search of a scoop.

"Anyway," pursued the prosecutor, "we had a few psychiatrists and a psychologist, talked to and evaluate Mr. Morrison. They are not saying that he suffers from psychosis or that he is dangerously

demented, but they came to the conclusion that his long, devastating experience at sea made him somewhat of a lunatic. They all concluded that without being totally insane, he is unbalanced, deranged, and very disturbed.”

The judge looked at Bill and asked: “Do you think you are a lunatic, Mr. Morrison?”

Bill, with an expression of compassion and forgiveness toward the prosecutor, replied: “No, Your Honor, I am as sane as he is.”

The onlookers laughed a little.

“I will give you a chance to defend yourself shortly.”

“Thank you.”

“You may continue, Mr. Bentley.”

“Well, Your Honor, we feel that before we should prosecute him, Mr. Morrison should be confined to a mental institute for a few months or until he is declared sane by his doctors.”

“Do you have any more arguments against Mr. Morrison?”

“Well, Your Honor. A few years ago, Mr. Morrison was dishonorably discharged from the Marines. On top of that, he used to be a medical doctor who lost the right to practice medicine. He divorced his wife and bought a sailboat to visit the world. He engaged his trip in the company of a strip dancer by the name of Cynthia Flaherty, who is now in jail. It shows that he was already a little peculiar.”

The judge glanced at Bill and asked: “Is this all true, Mr. Morrison?”

“Almost, Your Honor.”

“Mr. Bentley, anything else you want to add to this portfolio against Mr. Morrison?”

“One more thing, Your Honor. Two days after the beginning of their trip, and just before leaving the coast of Florida, Mr. Morrison and his lady friend had dinner in the Bar-restaurant at Lake Worth Marina. Well, Your Honor, they left without paying the bill. The local

police had no jurisdiction at sea. So Mr. Morrison and his friend got away. You can see that Mr. Morrison is not exactly an honest man.”

“Is that true Mr. Morrison?” asked the judge.

“With explanations and clarifications, the incident is true, Your Honor.”

“Anything else? Mr. Bentley,” asked Judge Stewart.

“Not for the moment, but we are still investigating the life of Mr. William Morrison.”

During the prosecutor’s presentation, a few more persons had entered the courtroom. The young journalist was now more attentive. His name was Carl Spencer. He had graduated in journalism and communications a few months ago and could not find steady employment. He had no choice but to work as a freelance reporter. His look and general appearance did not help him much. He was definitively not the type of reporter who would become an anchorman for a TV station. Like most young people with courage and determination, he assumed he would ultimately succeed. He had to find the great news—the stories and the scandals he could reveal to the world. He was hopeful that he would eventually be recognized and accepted in the world of the great journalists.

“Thank you, Mr. Bentley,” said the judge.

Judge Stewart took a long breath and drank a little water while observing the bearded man. Bill did not seem nervous or agitated. He was sitting patiently and calmly waiting for the judge to question him.

“Mr. Morrison, how do you plead? Are you guilty or not guilty of all these charges laid against you?”

Bill stood up and came closer to the bench. A little worried, the guard standing behind him followed.

"Stay in your place," said the judge to the guard. "I do not think that Mr. Morrison wants to hurt anyone. Do you want to attack me, Mr. Morrison?"

Bill offered one of his distinctive smiles. "Absolutely not, Your Honor. On the contrary, I would like to help you."

"Help me? Maybe you should start by helping yourself. Tell me your story, Mr. Morrison."

"Yes, Your Honor. I am healthy, sane, and not at all confused. I must, however, plead guilty to one of the accusations. I did not pay for the meals that Cynthia and I had, two years ago, in Lake Worth Marina restaurant."

"That's enough to get you in jail," said Judge Stewart.

"Your Honor, we never intended to leave without paying the bill. A quarrel happened between the two lesbian waitresses. One of them was making advances to Cynthia, who, foolishly, decided to play the game. The other woman became totally angry and turned her fury toward Cynthia. We never had a chance to finish our respective meal and were asked to leave. I decided that it was reasonable to withdraw from a possible fight. We left without thinking of paying for the meals. Cynthia mentioned the fact a little while later. I figured it would not be rational to return to the restaurant."

"Very well. Is there anyone here from the restaurant who would like to contradict this story?"

"No, Your Honor," said the prosecutor.

"Very well. These charges are dismissed," added the judge. "Now, Mr. Morrison, what is the story about you being the last prophet."

Everyone in the courtroom was listening. Bill told the judge everything he knew, all he remembered.

Pensive, the judge kept his eyes on Bill. Finally, he declared, "Mr. Morrison, you don't look insane, but your story is the worst tale of fiction I have ever heard in this court. I think I must agree

with the prosecutor and, for your own good, send you for mental treatments.”

“Your honor,” said Bill, still very calm. “Before you render judgment, may I address the court without interruption?”

“And what will be the purpose of this monologue?”

“To prove I am not insane and that I am who I am.”

“The last prophet?”

“And the last messenger.”

“Mr. Bentley,” said the judge to the prosecutor. “Are you in agreement with his request?”

“Yes, Your Honor. I have to hear this.”

“Go ahead, Mr. Morrison.”

Bill moved closer to the judge. “Judge Stewart, about two weeks ago, your young grandson Francis was hit by a car while riding his bicycle.”

“What does that have to do with this case?” The judge became evidently troubled.

“How do you know? Are you psychic? Keep talking but don’t go too far.”

“Your Honor, you granted me the right to speak without interruption. Following the accident, your grandson was diagnosed with two skull fractures and cerebral hemorrhage. Since the accident, the poor little guy is in a coma. His doctors told you and his parents that your grandson was terminal and would die within days.”

Everyone in the courtroom was silent. The young journalist was taking notes.

“I am warning you; don’t go too far, Mr. Morrison. Do not abuse my tolerance.”

“Your Honor, I can prove that I am not insane. That I am who I am. Lead me to your grandson’s bedside. I shall save his life.”

The judge stood up. "You went too far. You cannot play with feelings the way you just did. I will charge you with contempt of court."

"I told you, Your Honor. This man is totally insane," said the prosecutor.

"Keep silent," said the judge to Bentley. "Mr. Morrison, you are an evil man, and you deserve to be locked up for the rest of your life."

Bill raised his right arm and pointed his finger toward the judge. He was no longer smiling. His eyes were brighter than usual and seemed like if they were coming out of his head. His body was straight and trembling. The tonality of his voice was lower than normal. A splendid, majestic, and unequivocal force carried out of his body. He stood in grandeur in front of the judge and the people surrounding him. "Before you render judgment, won't you meet my ultimatum? If you do not, your grandson will die. If you take me to his bedside, he will live. Will you not grab the opportunity or is the fear to be ridiculed, if I fail, more important than Francis's life?"

Judge Stewart looked at Bill with a dubious and hesitating face. There was total silence in the courtroom. Carl Spencer was writing.

"Mr. Morrison and Mr. Bentley," ordered Judge Stewart, "follow me to my chambers."

Judge Stewart left the courtroom. The other two followed. His office was quite cramped, unornamented, severe, and formal. The furniture was composed of a bookcase, a big wooden desk covered with papers and books, the judge's chair, and four wooden chairs facing the judge; all resting on a dark carpet. There were a few photographs on the walls and a flag of the United States in the back corner.

"Mr. Morrison," asked the judge. "Can you explain how you can save my grandson's life? Are you a better doctor than the ones taking care of him?"

"No, Your Honor. I will bring Francis out of his coma by looking at him, touching him, and breathing life within his being."

The prosecutor so far quiet and looking back and forth from Bill to Judge Stewart asked: "Your Honor, you are not falling for this, are you?"

"Be quiet, Mr. Bentley," said the judge. "You don't know what is going on here anymore than I do. Only Mr. Morrison can clarify this situation. Mr. Morrison, first of all, how did you know that my grandson was dying?"

"I do not know why I know or how I know the things I know. When needed, information comes to my brain, inspired to me by a source of knowledge. Somewhat like, when light replaces darkness, you can see and understand things you could not understand before."

"How are you able to heal?"

"Your Honor," answered Bill with a look of infinite kindness on his face, "I do not heal. Life heals through me and controls the elements of nature. Life can create, heal, or destroy. My main task is to try to save humanity. I am the last prophet. If men do not hear me, understand and believe me, humanity will enter the age of darkness. The world, as we know it, will no longer be."

"Your Honor," said Prosecutor Bentley, standing up. "This man is completely mad!"

"One more time, be quiet, Mr. Bentley!"

"Your Honor?"

"Be quiet, Mr. Bentley!" repeated the judge. "Now, Mr. Morrison, I will meet your challenge. You will be escorted to the hospital. If my grandson lives, you will be blessed by my family forever. But if you deceive me, I will throw the book at you. I don't

mind being ridiculed, but I do not like to be fooled. Let's return to the courtroom."

More people had entered the small room. In fact, it was filled to capacity. Everyone was involved in a conversation. The guards at the back were preventing more curious individuals from entering. The judge returned to his bench, Bill and Prosecutor Bentley returned to their respective chairs. The young journalist was now sitting much closer to the front of the room. Using his cell phone, he was able to capture a few photos of Bill. It was illegal to bring a camera in the courthouse, but Carl had his ways. After a moment of silence, the judge spoke: "It is 11:30 a.m. This court will recess so that we can give Mr. Morrison the benefit of the doubt. How much time will you need, Mr. Morrison."

"With your grandson, Your Honor? Just a few minutes."

"We will be back in session at 3:30 this afternoon. Guard, put the handcuffs on Mr. Morrison."

An hour later, Bill was in the presence of the young patient. Upon his request and the approval of the judge, the guard removed the handcuffs. Bill placed his right hand on Francis's forehead, whispered a few words, placed his lips upon the mouth of the young man, burst into a trance, and fell on the floor. There was no reaction from the sick child. The judge looked at his grandson and then pointed his finger toward Bill: "Get this idiot out of here."

"I warned you about him," said Prosecutor Walker.

The guards helped Bill to stand, replaced the handcuffs on him, and led him out of the room. Judge Stewart approached his grandson and placed a kiss on his forehead. The young man moved and opened his eyes.

"Hi, Grandpa!"

Judge Stewart, a couple of doctors, three nurses, and Prosecutor Walker could observe the miracle. Not far behind, Carl

Spencer could not see what had happened, but he heard the emotional and heartwarming reaction of the witnesses.

Almost in tears, Judge Stewart took the boy's hand and kissed it. "Somebody tell the guards to bring Mr. Morrison back."

Carl Spencer transmitted the message. Bill was soon returned to the patient's room. Judge Stewart left his grandson to greet Bill and gave him an affectionate hug. "Thank you, thank you."

Prosecutor Walker said: "There's something fishy going on around here!"

The astonished doctors in the hospital wanted to know how this healing was possible. Seemingly exhausted Bill offered no explanation. He was offered something to drink and eat. He had a bite of a small hospital sandwich and drank two cups of coffee. Without handcuffs, Bill was taken back to the courtroom. The judge announced: "The circumstance and the events that occurred here today are beyond my present level of comprehension. I need to think and consult other judges and authorities before I can render judgment. Mr. Morrison will remain in captivity until this court reconvenes tomorrow morning at ten o'clock."

The judge stood up and left the courtroom.

Chapter 15

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Carl Spencer

Carl Spencer, the young journalist, was the last person to leave the courtroom. He was concentrating and briskly writing his observations on a pad of yellow paper. "This could be my big break."

He was confident that no other reporter or journalist was in the room during the arraignment. "I will be the first to report this news to the media."

Carl worked and studied hard to become a journalist. Unlike his two brothers, things were never easy for him. He was the third son of the family. He was the little one, the weak one. The only one who needed glasses and who did not excel in sports. His brothers would hardly ever play with him. They called him "girly," the one who should have been a girl. His father was a long-distance truck driver with frequent prolonged absences from home. He was a hard man and preferred by far his two first sons. His mother was a little gal who never confronted her husband. She was sometimes motherly and sweet with Carl but only when her husband and her two other sons were not at home. At school, Carl was often called the "leftover" or even the "placenta." His brothers were big, muscular, successful in sports, and popular with the students. Carl was the little one who was weak and clumsy. As he grew up, he rapidly learned how different he was and had to adapt to his situation. Carl's old, disabled grandpa became his best friend and his major positive influence.

"Grandpa," he would often ask, "why was I born the way I am? Why am I so different from my brothers?"

"Because," would say Grandpa, "you are meant to be different. God wants something else from you. They have the muscles, but you have the brain. You are the smart one. Let them laugh at you; ignore them. You are better than they are."

Carl became aware of the validity of grandpa's opinion a few years after the death of his grandfather. His brothers never finished high school. Carl graduated younger than anyone else in his class. He was definitely smarter than his two siblings. For many years, Carl was repelled by the idea that he had to be his brother's sex slave as they called him. They would take their pants down and say: "Make it, come, Carl. Get some good vitamins. Maybe it will make a man out of you."

For a while, Carl believed them. That's what he had to do to become strong like them. He soon learned he was being abused but decided not to tell anyone. He managed to find work, moved away from home, found a little room and board place, and sent himself to the university. His brothers became truck drivers. He advanced forward in his studies and received his degree in human relations and journalism. At home, his father and brothers still considered him as the odd one and would ridicule him every time they could. When his mother was alone with him, she would show him a little support and affection.

That day, he was in the right courtroom by coincidence. That day's hearing might have opened a few doors for him. He knew he had to write a good and dramatic story. That's what newspapers, radio, and TV stations wanted.

Carl had to write and report his story promptly. He left the courtroom, ran to his old car, and drove to his little apartment as fast as he could. Once he arrived at the aging building, his landlady said, "Good day to you, Carl!"

"Good day to you, Mrs. Clark."

"I hate to remind you again, Carl, but your rent is due."

"I know. I will take care of it real soon. Things are changing for me. I think I finally have a good story."

"I hope so, young man. I don't want to be unfriendly, but I need my money too!"

"I know you do. I will have something for you real soon."

He ran inside the building and climbed the stairs toward the third floor. Once he stepped on the second level, he saw Huguette, the thirty-five year-old daughter of Mrs. Clark. She was sweeping the floor with an old-fashioned broom.

"Hi, Carl, why are you so much in a hurry?"

"I have to go to my room to write an article."

"Not before you give me a kiss."

Carl placed a little kiss on her left cheek and tried to go around her. Huguette was a tall and heavyset woman. She blocked the way to the steps leading to the third floor.

"Let me go, Huguette! I have work to do..."

"Not before I get a real kiss. Come on, give your sweetheart some sugar..."

"First of all, I told you before you are not my sweetheart. Now here's your big kiss."

Carl was annoyed but did as she asked. He placed his arms around her, leaned his skeletal body against her oversized breasts, and placed his lips on her red-painted mouth. She dropped her broom and surrounded his waist with her long and heavy arms. He tried to move back. She held him against her with her left arm and pulled his head toward her lips. He was unable to get away from the tongue that penetrated his mouth as deep as it could.

"How do you like the taste of my new lipstick? It's strawberry!"

"It's all right, now let me go."

"Sure, baby, but we have to get together soon. I need some loving..."

Carl faked a little smile, walked around her, and rushed to the third floor. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. "What a disgusting pig," he whispered.

Carl met Huguette about three years ago during dinner time. It was the day when he rented his new small bedroom. The cost of

his room included breakfast and dinner. Carl first saw her as she was placing a bowl of chicken soup in front of him.

"Welcome to your new home," said Huguette. "My mother said your name is Carl. You're a student?"

"That's right. What's your name?"

"Huguette. My mother owns this place."

"What about your father?"

"He died a long time ago. It's just me and my mother. We share the work."

"All right. Well, thanks for the soup."

"I hope you will like it," said Huguette as she was leaving the dining room.

There were a few older men living in the building and sitting at the table with Carl. They are of no importance to our story. A few days after his arrival in his new room, Carl installed an old computer with an even older printer. On that same day, he received a first visit. After the gentle knock on the door, Carl opened and found himself face-to-face with Huguette.

"Hi, Carl, can I come in? I would like to talk with you."

"Well, yes, I guess so."

Huguette pushed her way through and sat on the small bed on the right side of the room.

"You need to talk to me? Is there something wrong?"

"No, silly. Nothing like that. I just wanted to spend a little time with you."

Carl was a little bewildered by her presence. He knew very little about women, and since most of them had ignored him during the course of his young life, he was not sure how to deal with them. When Carl moved into his new home, he had never been kissed and had never made love to anyone but himself, with the exception of going down on his brothers.

"Why do you want to spend time with me?"

"Well, because I like you. You live in our house, and I hardly ever see you. Don't you get lonely all by yourself in this room?"

"No, not really. I have a lot of studying to do."

"What are you studying? Do you want to be a doctor?"

"No, I am only on my first year at the university. I am not quite sure, but I think I want to be a journalist."

"Wow... A journalist? Why are you standing there like a floor lamp? Come and sit next to me."

Carl sat on the bed, about a foot away from her.

"What do you want to talk about?"

Huguette answered with what she thought was a big loving smile.

"My mother is out tonight. It's only you and me, here, on the third floor."

"And?"

"Well, you know..."

Huguette moved a little closer to Carl.

"I like you. I liked you the first time I served you that bowl of soup. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Did you ever notice that at dinnertime, I always give you a bigger portion? More than I give the other men."

"No, I can't say that I did."

"Well, I do and that's because I like you. Do you like me a little?"

"Hum, well, I suppose I do."

"Well, you know what?"

She placed her hand on his upper leg, very close to the groin. "My mother will be home soon. Before she gets here, I would like to turn off the light and play with you a little."

Carl was shocked. He could not believe what she said. Before he could reply, she was up, the light was turned off, and he could feel her body landing on him. He did not know what to do, so he decided not to do anything. Within a few minutes, she had all his and her clothing off, and her large breasts were resting on his face. Carl's body reacted; she knew it and gave him his first female to male orgasm.

Since then, there were quite a few more sexual encounters. Huguette would always be the instigator. He had to fight her off many times and that day was one of those days. He finally made it to his room and carefully chose his words to write his article. He read his text and corrected it a few times until he was satisfied. He printed many copies and left his room. On his way out, he had another short confrontation with Huguette. He let her caress him a little, and he fondled her breasts. He got away but not before he could hear her say, "I'll get you tonight!"

Carl visited every TV and Radio Stations in Orlando. In some instances, he could meet with the news or assistant news director, and in other cases, he had to leave his press report with a secretary. His last stop was with the largest newspaper in Orlando, *The Sentinel*. He met the chief editor to whom he gave his article and to whom he was able to tell the story.

Chapter 16

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Cynthia/Lowell State Penitentiary

Cynthia was serving her sentence in the Lowell State Penitentiary. The judge had given her three years and with good behavior, she could be liberated much sooner. Cynthia never acted properly and never knew how to stay out of trouble. In fact, on her first day, she had an argument with a male guard and a fistfight with one of the female prisoners. For her security and to teach her a lesson, she was confined to a solitary cell for seven days. The silence enveloped her. The loneliness was terrifying. She was lost within herself.

At the end of the sixth day, a female prison psychologist received Cynthia in a little office. The furniture was limited to a small metal desk and two wooden chairs. They both stood up and faced each other. The psychologist sat down and invited Cynthia to do the same. Cynthia stayed on her feet.

"Cynthia, I'm Susan Moore. I'm a psychologist. I am here to help you adapt to your new life."

"I don't belong here. I did not do anything wrong."

"Maybe so, Cynthia. Please sit down and let's talk. I am not your enemy. I really want to help you."

"Then call the damn Coast Guard and the damn judge and tell them they are full of shit. I did not do anything wrong."

"Well, reading your file, I can see they really had nothing to charge you with."

"See, I told you!"

"Please sit down, Cynthia, please!"

"OK, I'll sit down," said Cynthia, still aggressive.

"Do you know why you are in jail?"

"I don't deserve to be here. I did not do anything wrong."

"You are here because of your behavior."

"I got mad because of the way they treated me. They accused me of all kind of bullshit. I was stranded at sea in small, little dinghy. When they found me, they treated me like a criminal."

Cynthia was shouting these words. Tears were rolling from her eyes.

"I hate the bastards. I hate them!"

"I understand. You are not in jail for any crime you have committed. You are here for misconduct toward the officers of the law and the judge."

"And what about their misconduct toward me. They almost accused me of killing Bill. They implied that I was not a US citizen. They said I was involved with drug trafficking. They tormented me. They went way too far."

Cynthia was still shouting and crying. Susan spoke softly while kindly looking at Cynthia.

"Cynthia, you know you cannot hit a guard. That's a criminal offense."

"So I can't hit them, but they can push me around as much as they want? I have rights too, you know!"

"If you had said these things to the judge nicely and politely..."

"That old bastard! He was on their side. I knew the moment I saw his face."

"Please sit down, Cynthia," said Susan in a firmer tone of voice.

"Who the hell are you to tell me what to do? I'll sit down when I want to!"

Susan perceived her error. She should not become forceful. She was losing control of the conversation. She had to change her approach. So she started laughing. "Woo... what a temper! Now I know why you got in trouble."

Through her tears, Cynthia smiled a little. It was more a grimace than a smile. "OK, I'll sit down."

Susan paused for a short moment, presented a serious face, and continued: "Cynthia, you will be in this penitentiary for a while. There is nothing I can do to set you free."

"I figured that much!"

"You might as well make the best of it and get adapted."

"How do you get adapted to this shit-hole?"

"You have to accept your situation. You know, with good attitude and good behavior, you may get out of here in fifteen months!"

Cynthia bent her head and looked at her hands. Susan respected her silence. Cynthia uttered: "When I get back in the big area over there, one of these girls will attack me again. I will have to fight back!"

"I will ask the warden to send you to another group of prisoners. Nobody will know about your fight. Try to be nice and patient. It will be easier for you that way."

Cynthia remained silent.

"It's for your own good, Cynthia. You have to accept your situation and make the best of it."

"You already said that!"

"And I will say it again. It's the only way. Will you try?"

"Try what?"

"Don't make yourself the heroine of your own deception. Try to adapt and try to be nice?"

"You want me to act like a mouse?"

"Better act like a mouse for fifteen months than act like a lion for three years. Don't you think?"

"Yes, maybe."

"Now, Cynthia, you have to go back to solitary for only one more day. Tomorrow, they will bring you to a new group of women. Try to be nice. Try to make friends."

"And what if they insult me?"

"Let it go, Cynthia. Sometimes these women get a little hard on a newcomer, but it will pass. Try to make a couple of friends, and you will be fine. Can you try?"

"I will try."

The next day around noon, Cynthia was escorted by a male guard and Susan to a new cellblock. They entered a minimum-security area composed of a large rectangular room with a long table, about thirty wooden chairs, and in one of the corner an old twenty-five inches TV. Along the long sides of the rectangle, on each side of the room, there were cells, each with two beds and a metal gate that would be closed during curfews and nights. On each end of the common room, there were long steel bars with a gate in the middle. These gates allowed the guards and the inmates to leave the main area and go to another section of the prison.

Cynthia was guided to her cell. "Block "B," cell nineteen. Top bunk. That's your new address young woman."

She gave the guard the look, but before she could say anything, Susan interfered: "It's not too bad, Cynthia. Remember now, be nice and all will be fine."

Cynthia repressed the insults she had for the guard and walked into the small cell. Facing the back of her cell, she saw the two bunk beds on the right side. On the left, there was a compact sink, a small shelf, and to the right of the sink, a toilet. She noticed there was not any space left on the shelf.

The guard said, "You have the top bunk. In the bag, you will find sheets, a pillow, and a few articles like toothbrush, toothpaste, a comb, and a couple of towels. You will also find a clean uniform and underwear. You will get clean underwear every week and a clean uniform every two weeks."

"Where do I clean up and shower," asked Cynthia, almost in tears.

"Outside these gates," said the guard, "there is a common shower area. It services three different blocs like this one. You get to take a shower twice a week. The guard looked at his chart. The prisoners of block B go to the shower room on Mondays and Thursdays."

"What day is it today?" whispered Cynthia.

"It's Tuesday," replied Susan.

"So I don't get to clean up for two whole days?"

"She has been in solitary for seven days," said Susan to the guard. "Can't we make an exception and let her use the shower today?"

"Sorry, Susan, we have no exception."

"Bunch of bastards," whispered Cynthia, facing the guard.

"What did you say?"

"She did not say anything," interfered Susan.

Cynthia realized that Susan just saved her from a new stay in a solitary cell. She addressed a light smile toward Susan and looked at the guard.

"I don't see anybody in this cellblock. Do I have the whole place for myself?"

"They are in the dining area. After lunch, they will be taken to the outside yard for clean air and exercise."

"When do I get to eat something?"

"You missed lunch. You will eat at dinnertime. For this block, dinner is at 6:00 p.m."

"But I am hungry and thirsty now," said Cynthia raising the tone of her voice.

"Your hunger is not my problem," replied the guard. "If you are thirsty, you can drink out of your faucet."

Before Cynthia could say anything, Susan asked, "Can't we get her something to eat?"

"I can't," said the guard, "but you can if you want. There are a few food and soda machines in the forward lobby."

"I will get you a sandwich," said Susan.

She noticed that Cynthia was getting ready to insult the guard.

"Be patient, Cynthia, everything will fall into place."

"Thank you, Susan. Now what do I do?"

"You are free to obey the rule," replied the guard with a mighty attitude.

"Thank you for nothing," replied Cynthia.

"Cynthia," said Susan. "Remember you must be nice and polite. I will try to get you something to eat now. I will be back soon."

Susan walked away from cell nineteen. Cynthia sat on the lower bunk. The guard faced her, bent his knees to be at her level, and murmured, "You know, Cynthia, you are a very pretty woman. All you have to do is what Susan said. Be nice and be pleasant. You are very sexy! If you should decide to be very nice, I mean very nice. Well, life could be quite good for you around here."

Showing somewhat of a repulsive expression, Cynthia asked: "What do I have to do to be very, very nice? Suck your dick?"

The guard stood up, looked down at Cynthia, and said with an intimidating intonation: "Now, now, Cynthia, remember, life can be good here or it can be hell. Think about it."

The guard moved back toward the entrance of the cell while keeping an eye on Cynthia. She was boiling inside herself. She was looking at the floor, trying to control her exasperation and her tears. She heard the sound of a closing metal gate and footsteps. Susan was coming back.

"I have a nice chicken sandwich, a bag of chips, and a soda for you, Cynthia. Will that do until dinnertime?"

"Sure," said Cynthia while getting up. "I have something to tell you, Susan..."

Before she could finish her sentence, the guard moved toward her with threatening eyes. Cynthia quickly understood that silence could be a good thing.

"What did you want to tell me?" asked Susan.

"I want to thank you for your kindness. You are the only nice person I have met in this hellhole."

The guard moved back with a winning smile. Cynthia grabbed the sandwich, the chip, and the soda while Susan, a little concerned, looked back and forth from Cynthia to the guard. Susan had a long experience with prison life and could almost imagine the words that were exchanged between the guard and Cynthia. There was nothing she could do. Cynthia was right. Prison is a hellhole. Susan decided she had done all she could do. She said good-bye and good luck to Cynthia and walked away. The guard stayed by the gate a little longer and said: "You are a smart girl, Cynthia. I think we will get along."

"Pig!" replied Cynthia without looking at him.

The guard walked away, and Cynthia remained alone in the cell. About an hour later, Cynthia was in the center area, watching what TV, when the other inmates came back. Most of them rapidly looked toward Cynthia and went to their respective cells. Others sat at the center table and kept going with their conversations. Two of the girls walked toward Cynthia. A tall, skinny, short-haired blonde said: "Who the hell said you could turn the TV on?"

"There was no one to ask," answered Cynthia without looking at the woman.

"Look at me when I talk to you."

Cynthia slowly turned her head and looked at the skinny woman. OK! I'm looking at you. Now what?"

"Are you some kind of a smart Alec? I'm the top girl in this bloc, so you better wise up!"

"That is right," said the second girl.

She was small and seemed to be a mixture between Oriental and Caucasian races. Before Cynthia could engage the two women, a third woman, black, hard faced and heavy set, about fifty years old, stood next to her and asked: "Are you the one who moved into my cell?"

"Is your cell number nineteen?"

"Yes, it is."

"Well," said Cynthia quietly. "You have a new cell mate."

The black woman gazed at Cynthia with satisfaction. That fresh, young, and good-looking female would be her new cell mate. The previous one was released about a week ago. The large woman did not mind being alone in her cell after curfew, but it was always more fun to have a partner. Her previous fellow inmate was well trained and would do whatever she was told. The new girl would have to be drilled, but it would be worth it. She was much cuter and seemed very tasty.

"All right, follow me to our cell. We have to talk."

"OK," said Cynthia as she left her seat.

"Hold it," said the tall, skinny one. "I was talking to her."

"Go play with your Asian friend, this one is mine," said the black woman.

The two women confronted each other. The white woman decided to step back.

"Since she will be sleeping in your room, you can have her. But remember, the next one is mine."

"The next one is yours," said the black woman. Turning toward Cynthia, she added, "Follow me. We need to talk."

"OK," replied Cynthia.

She followed the black woman toward cell nineteen. Once in the cell, the black woman sat on her bunk and invited Cynthia to sit next to her. She took a very gentle tone of voice to engage the conversation, which would become seduction by intimidation.

"My name is Dot. Short for Dorothy. What's your name, darling?"

"Cynthia."

"Good, I like the name. Very romantic. Now, let me tell you a thing or two that you need to know. In a place like this, you are shit unless you have a protector. You are lucky to be in my cell. I can be your protector. The other bitches out there won't bother you as long as I am, like, your bodyguard."

"What do I have to do for you to be my bodyguard?"

"Simple, girl, you do as I say. You keep me happy, and you will be safe."

"Does that include sex?"

"Right to the point, hey? Oh yes, darling, lots of good sex. What else is there to do during the long nights? I'm gonna make you feel good."

"So I'm going to be your bitch?"

"No, you're too cute. You're going to be my lover. Did you ever have sex with a woman?"

"No," said Cynthia.

It was not exactly true. Cynthia had a few same sex experiences while she was a dancer. She preferred men by far, but sex with a pretty young girl could be gratifying. That huge, black woman with these big falling knockers was repulsive to Cynthia, but what choice did she have. If she said no to the advances, she would be on her own, get in trouble again, and sent back to solitary. If she accepted, she would have to tolerate this massive mass of dark brown flesh all over her body. She decided to become Dot's toy.

"What will happen with the guards? Will you protect me against them also?"

"Most of the guards around us are female. Very few are lesbians. The male guards only come around to inspect or bring in new inmates. You shouldn't have to worry about them."

"The guards who brought me to this cell implied that I should be nice to him."

"You may never have to do it. But if you have to, it's better to give in to these pigs than to suffer the consequences. By the way, never take a shower without me. If I am there with you, nobody will attack your cute little ass."

After dinner, on the same evening, and once they were alone in their cell, Dot invited Cynthia on the lower bunk.

"Can't we wait till tomorrow night?" begged Cynthia. "I am so tired."

"No, no," said Dot. "I want you now. My last cell mate left me more than a week ago. I'm in heat. You won't have to do anything. I will do everything to you. I will undress you and wash your body all over with my tongue. Oh, I can't wait. Come here, baby."

"I didn't take a shower for more than ten days. I'm not clean."

"Oh... you will only taste better."

Cynthia realized it would be better for her to just submit to the bitch in heat. She had one of the longest orgasms in her life.

After this episode of ugly sex, Cynthia climbed into her bed. She was beaten. She had given in. She silently cried for a while almost hoping she would fall asleep and never wake up again. She woke up the next morning before the sound of the bell. She remembered the last few days, yesterday, and last night. She was ashamed of herself, but she was tamed. She truly had no choice.

Time went by. Day after day, Cynthia did her best to stay out of trouble. She only had one fight. It happened in the shower room.

One of the inmates tried to make a pass at her. She grabbed Cynthia's left breast from behind while Cynthia was washing her hair, and while Dot was sitting on one of the toilets. Cynthia wiped the soap out of her eyes and turned toward her aggressor. When she could recognize who it was, she punched the old naked woman in the face and gave her a broken nose. Some of the other women in the shower room decided to help their friend and attacked Cynthia. Dot came to the rescue. The brawl was short-lived. Cynthia and a few of the other women had to meet with the warden. Since Cynthia had thrown the first punch, three months were added to her sentence. After that incident, Cynthia was definitely broken and decided to submit to whatever.

She was called to the nurse's office a couple of times, where she had to satisfy one of the male guards and the head nurse. She submitted to the abuse without complaining and, in fact, she enjoyed the change from the regular monotony of cellblock B and the sexual behaviors of her totally disgusting cell mate. Slowly the days rolled down the calendar.

Two years later, while watching the news, most of the inmates in cellblock B heard Cynthia scream: "Oh my god! Bill is alive!"

Chapter 17

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill Meets Peter Stewart

As soon as the judge left, Bill was escorted out of the courtroom. To his great surprise, the guards did not put the handcuffs on him.

“Are you not going to handcuff me as per your regulations?”

“No, sir,” said one of the guards. “By order of the judge.”

“What a nice judge!”

Bill was led out to a police car and taken to the Thirty-Third Street Orange County Jail. Once he arrived, two jail guards guided him to the warden’s office. The man behind the desk was reading some documents. He paid no attention to Bill’s presence. The man was in his fifties, almost hairless, and wearing thick glasses and a dark brown suit with a bright red tie. He eventually raised his head, looked at the guards, and said: “You boys can leave. I need to talk to the prisoner. One of you can stay on the other side of the door to escort the prisoner after I’m done communicating with him!”

“Yes, sir,” said one of the guards.

They left the office. The warden ultimately looked at Bill and said with a heavy Southern accent: “My name is Hector Brown, warden of the Thirty-Third Street Orange County Detention Center, and you are William T. Morrison. Well, you must be some kind of special man.”

“Everything that lives is special,” replied Bill.

“Hum... Take a chair, won’t you?”

Bill did as he was asked. Warden Brown looked down at his documents and ignored Bill for a while. He finally raised his head and said: “Well, Judge Stewart seems to think that you are a very

special person. I'm supposed to treat you like a VIP. Do you know why you are so special, Mr. Morrison?"

"Everything that lives is special," replied Bill with a smile.

"You already said that. Are you being a wise guy with me? Anyway, I have to treat you as a guest and not a prisoner. You will not be situated in a cell but in one of our special rooms. You will not have to wear a jail uniform. Your room will have its own bathroom with all the sanitary supplies that you may need. Your dinner and breakfast will be served in your room. You can order whatever you want from a menu that is already in the room. You cannot order and receive drinks containing intoxicants. Tomorrow, you have to be in court by ten in the morning. Your breakfast will be served at seven. Is that understood?"

All this was said, slowly, in a very monotonous and toneless voice.

"Yes, sir, I understand, thank you for your kindness."

"I'll ask you one more time. Why are you getting such a special treatment?"

"I guess that the judge likes me!"

Pensive, the warden scratched his left cheek with the back of the pen he was holding. "You understand that you will not be free to wander around. There are no locks on these rooms, but I will have a guard outside your door all night."

"I do not want to go anywhere, sir. All I need is an acceptable meal and a good night's sleep."

"Sure."

The warden stood up from behind his desk and slowly walked toward the office door. He was a small man, almost as round as he was tall. He was carrying an imposing abdomen.

"Guard, take this man to room three. Make sure he is treated with respect."

“Yes, sir,” said the guard. Looking at Bill, he said, “Won’t you follow me, sir?”

At 4:35 that afternoon, Bill followed the guard along a wide passageway. His room was only a few doors away from the warden’s office. Once inside, he was pleased with his one-night residence. Everything was clean. The queen-size bed seemed comfortable. The guard asked Bill to prepare his meal selections, as early as possible, for dinner that night as well as for breakfast the next day. Bill ordered chicken soup, T-bone steak with a baked potato, and a Cesar salad. Breakfast would be composed of orange juice, fruit salad, and ham and cheese omelet with rye bread toast. After his selection was handed to the guard, Bill prepared a cup of herbal tea from the coffee and tea percolator that was on the desk next to the bathroom. The shower was inviting. Bill proceeded with a major cleanup. He would have liked to trim his beard and hair but did not find any scissors. He asked the guard but received a refusal based on security.

“I do not want to commit suicide. I just want to trim my beard!” said Bill, a little sarcastic.

“I am sure,” replied the guard. “It’s regulation.”

“Oh yes. Regulations. We must obey regulations.”

The remark was made in a pleasant way. Bill reentered his room and did the best to make himself presentable. By 5:30 p.m., he was stretched on the bed and watching TV. A few minutes later, someone knocked at the door. Bill opened it, and the guard said: “Sir, we have an authorized visit for you. Attorney Peter Stewart would like to talk to you.”

“He may come in,” said Bill.

Peter Stewart was a tall man, in his thirties, slim, with a pleasant appearance and a friendly smile. He offered his hand and shook Bill’s hand with almost devotion.

“First of all, Mr. Morrison, I want to thank you, in the name of my wife, my family, and in my name, for what you did for my son today. It’s a miracle. You made a miracle. We owe you his life!”

This phrase was delivered with sincere emotion. Peter Stewart had tears in his eyes.

“You are so very welcome,” said Bill also touched. “But I want you to understand. I did not make a miracle. Life did. I am only a tool!”

“I can’t understand how you did it. My son will live. That is obviously crucial for us!”

“You are right, Mr. Stewart. Your son will be well.”

“Please call me Peter. How can I repay you? What can I do for you, Mr. Morrison?”

Bill stared at Peter and said: “If I may call you Peter, you may call me Bill. There is not much you can do for me. No one can understand what happened to me and why. Not even myself. I am no longer just a man. My body and my mind were captured. I have been transformed. I am the last prophet.”

“That’s what my father said. He doesn’t know what to think.”

“Your father, like all others, did not believe my words. I had to make what you called a miracle to prevent him from sending me to an asylum.”

“Without your demonstration, without the miracle, it was impossible for him to believe what you were saying.”

“I understand. That’s why Life gave me the inspiration and the power to save your son.”

“Anyway, I thank you, Mr. Morrison. Hum... I mean, Bill. How can I repay you?”

“Have a chair, Peter. The guard said you are an attorney?”

“Yes, I am.”

“What kind of attorney? What type of law do you specialize in?”

"I am what you could call a 'touch all' type of attorney. I somewhat prefer criminal law."

"Then, I know how you can help me."

"I will do whatever I can. It will no cost you anything. Anytime in the course of your life, if you ever need an attorney, I will be there for you! I mean anytime."

This was said with passion and total sincerity. Bill gathered his thoughts and said: "Two years ago, a young woman and myself left on a sailboat to visit the world."

"Yes," said Peter. "I read your file. Her name was Cynthia, hum...?"

"Flaherty! A few days after our departure, our boat capsized. Two years later, when I came back from wherever I was, I asked about her. I thought she was dead. Life told me that she was alive."

"I'm sorry to interrupt, Bill, but when you talk this way, I can understand why some people would think you are mad!"

Bill chuckled and continued: "While I was detained by the Coast Guard, I received confirmation that Cynthia was still alive and had been arrested. I do not have all the details justifying her arrest. She is a bit of a rebel, but overall, she's a good person. Anyway, I would like to find out why she was arrested, where she is incarcerated, and..."

"And?"

"I am asking you to become her attorney and get her out of jail as soon as possible."

"It will be an honor for me to help her. Is that all I can do for you?"

"Yes, that's all."

"I could also become your attorney. I can help."

"I do not need the services of an attorney. Life is the greatest attorney of all."

“Well, after today’s demonstration, I can see what you mean. But as your attorney, I can represent you when you are absent. I can defend you when you...”

“Peter, your name is Peter. You could be my first disciple,” interrupted Bill with a big grin.

“Disciple? Like in Jesus’s disciple?”

“I’m just kidding, Peter.”

Peter was not a religious man. He had no faith in priests or preachers. The last time he was in church was for his marriage to Elizabeth. They were married in church to indulge their respective families, their neighbors, and many of the members of their political relationships. The Bible and the story of Jesus were a delusion for him. Now, this man in front of him is acting like Jesus, trying to get disciples.

“You seem so confused, Peter. I know what you are thinking. I went through the same state of mind when Life talked to me. I thought I was going nuts. I learned to believe during my short trip on the Coast Guard Cutter. Life gave me the powers to raise a storm, a waterspout, and the control to rule over it and bring it down. I am not insane, Peter. Your lack of faith in organized religion is not an offense. Life does not want any parts of men ‘religions.’ It does not accept to be known as God or called God. Men did and are still doing too many damaging actions in the name of God. I assume that your son and the son of Elisabeth were given mercy by Life so that you and I would meet.”

“This is unbelievable. Just unbelievable,” said Peter. “I’m totally confused. By the way, how did you know the name of my wife? I don’t remember mentioning her name.”

“I don’t know. It just came to my mind.”

Peter gathered his thoughts and said, “For the first time in my life, I am, hum... I am bewildered. Oh well... I will see what I can do to get Cynthia out of jail. My father will help me.”

“Thank you!”

“Bill, with all your powers, could you not free Cynthia by yourself?”

Bill laughed and replied: “You are the intermediary, Peter!”

“I see!”

At 5:55 p.m., the guard knocked at the door. “Your dinner is here, sir!”

“Bring it in. I’m starving,” said Bill.

Peter walked toward Bill, grabbed his hand, and said, “I will let you eat in peace. Again I want to thank you. Oh, by the way, I will be in court with you tomorrow, maybe not as your attorney but as an adviser.”

“Thank you,” replied Bill. “I enjoyed our little meeting.”

Peter left the room. The guard placed the food on the small table and left. “Enjoy your food, sir!”

“Thank you, my friend. I’m sure I will.”

After the satisfactory meal, Bill made himself a cup of hot tea and went to bed. He watched TV for a few minutes and fell asleep. The next morning, he was up by six thirty. He made himself presentable. He did not like the idea of wearing the same clothes he had on the day before, but what choice did he have?

“Well Life? You could give me something new to wear? Are you ignoring me? Oh I see, you only react when you contact me. OK, your messenger will look like a bum if that’s what you want.”

At five past seven, the breakfast was in the room. Bill enjoyed his meal while watching TV. At seven twenty, a special news bulletin attracted his attention. A male announcer was saying, “A man calling himself ‘the last prophet’ was at the Florida District Courthouse of Orange County yesterday, appearing in front of Judge Stewart. This

man by the name of William Morrison was saved by the US Coast Guards after his sailboat broke down at sea. At the time of rescue, the man seemed a little confused and was sent to two different psychiatrists for mental evaluation. The doctors estimated that William Morrison was irrational and suffered from a touch of dementia. William Morrison refused the allegations of the psychiatrists and asked for his day in court. At the request of the prosecutor, we are told that Judge Stewart was determined to send Mr. Morrison to a rehabilitation center for the mentally insane. William Morrison who was acting as his own attorney was given the right to address the court. William Morrison stated that he was the last prophet. During his presentation, William Morrison reminded Judge Stewart that two weeks ago, one of his grandsons had an accident and was presently in a coma and close to his death. Judge Stewart asked Mr. Morrison what was the relation between this court case and his grandson's accident. Mr. Morrison invited the judge to take him to the hospital, where his grandson was dying. 'I will save his life,' said Morrison. Very upset, Judge Stewart warned William Morrison to stay away from this subject. The prosecutor and Mr. Morrison were invited to meet behind closed doors by the judge and followed him to his chamber. Upon the return of the three in the courtroom, Judge Stewart made the following statement, 'This court will be adjourned so that we can give Mr. Morrison the benefit of the doubt.' Once at the hospital, and according to our reporter, Mr. Morrison pulled Francis Stewart, Judge Stewart's grandson, out of his coma. Many different persons witnessed the event. Upon his return to the courtroom, the judge made the following statement: "The circumstance and events that occurred here today are beyond my present level of comprehension. I need to think and consult other judges and authorities before I can render judgment. Mr. Morrison will remain in captivity until this court reconvenes tomorrow at ten o'clock." Tomorrow morning, this station will have a reporter in Judge Stewart's court so that we can bring you the rest of the story. Now for the weather today..."

“Oh. Oh... that could be a problem!” mumbled Bill.

Chapter 18

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill Returns to Court

Bill's second day in court was very different. First of all, the little courtroom was filled to capacity—mostly congested by journalists and reporters. Second change: Bill was sitting at the same table, but this time, there was someone in the chair next to him. The young lawyer Peter Stewart insisted, and Bill finally agreed. Peter would act as his consultant. The other point of interest was that the Prosecutor Mark Bentley had a few more people, advisers, or attorneys sitting at his table.

"All rise," said the clerk of the court. "Honorable Judge Martin Stewart presiding."

Before sitting down, the judge looked around the room and stared at a few persons, reached his chair but did not immediately sit down. "Today, I want order in this court. I can see we already have too many media people. I will accept your presence, but I will set a few rules. I will not tolerate the taking of videos or photographs. I know that you have your press pass to bring these instruments through security and in the courthouse. But I will not allow you to use them in my courtroom."

You could hear a low murmur of disagreement.

"Yesterday, somebody took a picture of Mr. Morrison in this courtroom. This was done without my consent and without my knowledge. By the way, I don't know who the photographer was, but it was a very bad photo. If the person who took the photo is in this courtroom, please make yourself known."

The judge looked around until his eyes stopped on a young man who stood up from his chair located very close to Bill's position.

"I saw you in my courtroom yesterday. You were first at the back and then moved closer to the front. Did you take the picture?"

"Yes, I did, Your Honor," replied Carl Spencer.

"How did you take the picture?"

"With my cell phone, Your Honor."

"How did you get the cell phone in here? Security is not supposed to let cell phones in the building."

"I used my press card, Your Honor."

"So you're a reporter?"

"Yes, I am, Your Honor. I'm a journalist."

"What's your name?"

"Carl Spencer, Your Honor."

"You were the only reporter in here yesterday. Did you give the story to all the media?"

"Yes, I did, Your Honor."

"You may sit down, Mr. Spencer. I'll have my eyes on you. If you do one thing, only one thing that does not please me, I will have you thrown out of my court."

"Yes, Your Honor. Thank you, Your Honor."

The judge finally sat and looked down for a few seconds. He was gathering his thoughts. "What happened in this court yesterday is very unusual. It exceeds in complexity any other cases that were ever presented before me. Yesterday, I consulted a few other judges and legal minds. Some suggested that I am now too personally involved with this case to be able to render a fair ruling."

Peter Stewart stood up and said, "Your Honor, my client and I believe that you have the fairness, the knowledge, and the ability to render a fair judgment."

"Are you now, officially, Mr. Morrison's attorney?"

Peter Stewart looked at Bill with a question in his facial expression. Bill stood up. "Let me answer, Your Honor. Peter Stewart is now, and I insist on the word now, my attorney."

“Very well, Mr. Morrison, please sit down. You may continue Mr. Stewart.”

“As I was saying, Your Honor, we formally ask you to remain the judge for this case.”

The Prosecutor Mark Bentley stood up and said, “Your Honor isn’t Attorney Peter Stewart your son?”

“You know very well that he is, Mr. Bentley. What’s your point?”

“Your Honor, because of what happened yesterday, and if your son is representing Mr. Morrison, I wonder if...”

“If what, Mr. Bentley. Are you insinuating that I may not render a fair judgment because my son is the attorney for the defense?”

“Well, no, Your Honor. I am not insinuating anything of the kind. But you said it yourself. What happened yesterday left you a little confused... ?”

Peter Stewart stood up and interrupted Bentley’s question and the judge’s answer, “Your Honor, there is no doubt that we are all a little confused about what happened yesterday. Now, if we must replace every confused person, then we must replace everybody, including the prosecutor. He must be very confused. Just look at all the consultants he brought with him today.”

“Your Honor, I object,” said the prosecutor.

“Overruled,” said the judge. “So what is your point, Mr. Stewart?”

“My client and I think that Your Honor should stay and that all the people implicated yesterday should remain involved.”

“I object Your Honor,” said Bentley. “This remark is self-serving. Plus, Your Honor, if we keep the same people who were involved yesterday, then Peter Stewart, your son, should not be here.”

"Your Honor," said Peter Stewart, "by law, a defendant has the right to request an attorney during the course of his trial. This is what Mr. Morrison did, and I am his attorney. We are accepting this team of so-called experts that Prosecutor Bentley felt necessary to bring with him. Prosecutor Bentley should accept the assistance I am bringing Mr. Morrison."

"I object, Your Honor, I object to the allusion about my so-called experts."

"Sustained, Mr. Bentley. Mr. Stewart, will you please select your words less aggressively."

"Your Honor," continued Peter Stewart. "Mr. Morrison had to give this court a very strong demonstration to be recognized as someone special. Should he be sent to another court, he may have to do the something similar to establish that he is not delusional."

"Your point is well taken, Mr. Stewart and..."

"Your Honor, I must object!" said Prosecutor Bentley.

"Sit down, Mr. Bentley and let me continue. I will go to my chambers and will return in thirty minutes. Until then, the court is in recess."

The judge left. Comments could be heard from every corners of the room. Bill smiled to Peter Stewart and said: "Very interesting. In fact, it's almost amusing. The idiocy and the inability of the human race are in full demonstration. Give men something new, something they do not understand, and they will show how ignorant they are."

"Hum..." said Peter.

"By the way," asked Bill, "I would like to talk to this young journalist, Carl Spencer. Can we legally ask him to come closer to us?"

"I think so, let me get him."

Peter did not have to walk very far. Carl Spencer was only a few yards behind Bill's chair.

"Mr. Spencer," said Peter to Carl, "can you give us a minute of your time? Bill Morrison and I have a few questions for you."

Carl Spencer agreed to follow Peter, but his mind became very active. *What kind of problem am I in now?* He approached Bill with a little resistance but managed to keep a smiling face. Bill stood up as soon as Carl was close to him and offered his hand. Carl appreciated the gesture.

"Have a chair next to me," said Bill. "I want to thank you."

"Thank me? Why? I thought you would be upset with me."

"On the contrary, young man. I want everyone to know the message I have to deliver. Because of you, I was on the news this morning. That is exactly what I needed. It's a good start."

Attorney Peter Stewart was standing next to the two men and did not intervene in the conversation. He did not quite understand why Bill was so happy with the young reporter.

"Well, I'm happy you feel this way," said Carl, quite relieved. "I will do all I can to bring you on the front page. This time, I won't be alone. All other reporters in this courtroom will compete with me."

"That is good," said Bill.

"Is it?" asked Peter Stewart. "The press could get you in trouble."

"Not a problem," replied Bill. "The more they talk about me, the easier it will become to transmit my message." "Mr. Spencer," continued Bill. "Since you worked so well to attract the attention of the media, how would you like to work as my press agent for a while?"

"Your press agent?" asked Carl.

"Your press agent?" asked Peter.

"Yes," said Bill. "In one day you were able to bring all these hungry journalists in here. With you on my side, the whole world will soon find out about my message."

"Well... hum... I don't know. I was hoping this scoop would open a door for me in one of the local TV station. This is really what I want."

"What do you really want, Carl?" asked Bill.

"I want to be a full-time reporter with one of the major TV stations."

"I'm making you a better offer, Carl. As my press agent, your name will be known all over the world. Every person in the media will know who you are. Peter Stewart, my attorney, Carl Spencer, my press agent, and I will carry and deliver Life's message to the world."

"It sounds good, Mr. Morrison but..."

"But?"

"I have to work. I need to earn some money. I am totally broke. I have debts. I didn't even pay my rent last month."

"If Mr. Morrison wants you, and if you want to work with Mr. Morrison, I can financially help you," commented Peter. The remark produced a short silence between the three men. Carl looked at Peter, at Bill, at his hands, and at the floor to finally say, "I don't know what to think."

"Do not think, Carl. Just follow your heart. I have a mission. I must talk to humanity. I am not a prophet of doom. I carry the message of Life. To help me is to help save the world."

"If you want to save the world as you have saved my son," commented Peter, "I am behind you all the way."

"Will the people believe us?" asked Carl.

"Probably not. Some will and most will not."

"So what's the use?"

"If you were alone in the middle of a lake, and if shore was far away, would you keep swimming as long as you could or would you give up without trying? Would you not swim to your last breath?"

"I would swim facedown and I would swim face up. I would swim and do all I can to reach shore," said Peter.

"I would do the same," said Carl.

"That is why we must try, my friends. We must try to our last breath."

"Mr. Morrison," said Carl.

"Call me Bill."

"Bill, are you really what you say you are?"

"Let me ask you both to turn around," said Bill, "and look at the young man standing in the back of the room. The young man with the green polo shirt and the blue jeans. Can you see him?"

"Yes," said Peter.

"I can see him," said Carl.

"His name is Richard Clark. Seaman Clark of the US Coast Guard. When I was picked up at sea, he was serving on the cutter that eventually brought me to Cape Canaveral."

"Is he important to us?" asked Peter.

"Seaman Clark was told by his captain to remain silent about a special incident."

"What incident?" asked Carl.

"He will tell you." Then looking at Peter, Bill continued: "Peter, upon the return of the judge, there are three things that I would like you to ask him."

"What are they?"

"First, before he renders judgment, ask him for the right to get a testimony from Seaman Clark."

"I should be able to do that."

"Second, I do not want to be released under conditions. I want total freedom."

"It may be more difficult, but I will try."

"Third, I want my sailboat, my personal things, and documents returned to me."

"Well, if we get you released without conditions, it should be easy to get your boat and things back."

"Now, Carl. Will you become my press agent?"

"Sir, may I give you my definitive answer at the end of the trial?"

"You may, young man, you may," replied Bill with a kind smile. "However, I already know the answer."

"You do? What do you think it will be?"

"The three of us will soon walk out of the courthouse. We will be pursued and questioned by hundreds of people. People will ask me for miracles. The press will want to know more. Many will throw insults to my face. We will not answer, except for you, Carl. We will then find security in a yellow cab"

"What will I say?"

"You will say that we will answer questions and make our comments during the press conference we will hold in a few days."

"And you are sure? Mr. Morr... I mean, Bill. You already know that the judge will set you free?"

"He will!"

"Well, if the judge sets you free, I will be your man!"

"You are a man of little faith, Carl. I will never hold this fact against you."

"The judge is coming in," said Peter.

Judge Stewart took place on his bench and said, "I have come to a decision. Before I reveal my judgment, let me ask the prosecution and the defense if there are any other comments they would like to address the court."

Before Prosecutor Bentley could react, Peter Stewart almost yelled at the judge: "Your Honor, there is one person in the courtroom who has special information about this case. With your permission, I would like him to testify."

Peter looked at Bill and whispered: "This better be good!"

"Trust me, Peter."

"You may call your witness," said the judge.

"I call Richard Clark, seaman with the US Coast Guard."

While saying these words, Peter was facing and pointing a finger toward the seaman. Most people turned their face to see the person Peter Stewart was aiming at. Young Seaman Clark reacted as if he was coming out of a dream. "Me?" said Richard Clark. "I have nothing to say. There is nothing I can tell you."

"Bailiff," said the judge. "Open the way and escort Mr. Clark to the witness chair."

A big, tall, middle-aged bailiff did as he was asked. Seaman Clark was soon in the witness chair. He swore to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Peter approached the young man and asked, "What is your full name?"

"Richard Clark."

"You are a seaman on a US Coast Guard cutter. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir."

"A few days ago, you were on the cutter that rescued Mr. Morrison from his damaged sailboat. Is that also right?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who was your captain?"

"Commander Parson, sir."

"I'm told that something very special happened during or after the rescue of Mr. Morrison. Can you tell me what took place?"

Seaman Clark was very hesitant when he mumbled his answer. "I cannot, sir."

"What did you say, Seaman Clark? Speak clearly, please."

Still hesitant, Clark repeated: "I said that I cannot answer your question, sir."

"Why not?"

"Captain's order, sir."

Peter faced the judge and asked: "Your Honor, can we mention to this young man that he is under oath. He must answer my questions."

"You have to answer, young man," said the judge.

Seaman Clark looked at the judge and said, "But, sir, Your Honor, sir. Hum... If I answer, I am disobeying order."

"This court has supremacy over the orders of a Coast Guard commander. You have to answer or you will be charged with contempt of court. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir. I mean, Your Honor."

"Will you answer?"

"Yes, Your Honor. But..."

"But what?"

"What if I get thrown out of the Coast Guard? What if I get a dishonorable discharge?"

"It will not happen. This court and our constitution will protect you. Mr. Stewart, you may pursue."

"Thank you, Your Honor," said Peter. "Now, Seaman Clark, can you tell me what happened on the cutter, the day that Mr. Morrison was on board?"

The audience in the small courtroom was totally silent and looking toward William Morrison and toward Seaman Clark. Bill seemed completely at peace. Reporter Spencer could not hide his nervousness. He looked at Bill and asked, "What happened, Bill? What the hell happened? Tell me?"

"He will tell you," replied Bill very calmly.

"Oh, I'm sorry. I said 'hell.' I'm sorry."

"The word does not offend me," replied Bill. "It's only a word."

After a few moments of hesitation, Peter asked one more time, "Seaman Clark, are you ready to answer and to tell us what happened on the US Coast Guard a few days ago?"

"Yes, sir. I will answer." Seaman Clark paused for a moment.

"Well, we are waiting, Seamen Clark."

“Well, sir, it was a miracle.”

Seaman Clark looked at Bill and continued, “This man did a miracle. It was unbelievable.”

“What happened?” asked Peter, “what kind of miracle?”

“Well, sir. Our Commandant Parson had a long talk with Mr. Morrison. I was on guard, standing by the commandant. Mr. Morrison was telling his story to the commandant. He was saying that he was a prophet and something like the last messenger. The commandant came to the conclusion that Mr. Morrison was lying to him, or that he was a total nutcase. The commandant could not believe that Mr. Morrison had been on his broken vessel for over two years.”

“Continue,” said Peter.

“Yes, sir. Well, the commandant insisted that Mr. Morrison was a drug dealer. Upon his denial, I was told to take Mr. Morrison to the Guardhouse. Before leaving the deck, Commandant Parson said to the prisoner: ‘If you are a prophet, you should be able to make miracles.’ Mr. Morrison asked the commandant if he believed in miracles. The commandant said no. Well, sir, that’s when it happened.”

“What happened?” asked Peter.

Everyone in the audience was glued to the words of Seaman Clark.

“Well, sir. Mr. Morrison asked to be taken to the front of the boat. The commandant thought he wanted to jump. So anyway, the commandant and I escorted Mr. Morrison to the front of the boat. It was a beautiful day, the sea was calm, hardly a cloud in the sky, no wind whatsoever.”

The young man stayed voiceless and reticent for a minute.

“Well, tell us,” said Peter, showing some impatience.

"Calm down, Mr. Stewart," said the judge. "He will tell us. Won't you, Seaman Clark?"

"Yes, sir," said Clark. "Well, this man, he was looking at Bill, raised his right arm, and pointed a finger toward the horizon, where the sky touched the water. I looked where he was pointing and I saw..."

"What did you see?" asked Peter.

"I saw a water spout in formation. It grew very fast and was coming toward our boat."

Seaman Clark was almost screaming. The judge, all the attorneys, the reporters, and the rest of the audience were attached to his lips. Bill was calm, showing no emotions as if this story did not concern him.

"Keep going, young man," said the judge.

"Well, sir. The spout was growing and was on a collision course with our boat. The commandant was screaming and telling Mr. Morrison to stop the spout before it was too late. Mr. Morrison lowered his arms and the water spout started to disappear until it was completely gone."

The young man looked down. The judge asked: "You saw this phenomenon with your own eyes?"

"Yes, sir. I mean, Your Honor."

"Was this incident included in your commandant's report?" asked Peter.

"I don't know, sir. Before getting off the boat, Commandant Parson suggested that we were submitted to some kind of magic trick, and we would look like fools if we ever made mention of it. So we were ordered not to talk about it."

"Anything else you would like to add?"

"No, sir," said Seaman Clark.

"I'm done with this witness," said Peter.

"Mr. Bentley, do you have any questions for the witness?" asked the judge.

"Only a few, Your Honor."

Bentley took an appearance of grander as he approached the witness. "Seaman Clark, do you know that you are under oath?"

"Yes, sir.

"Seaman Clark, are you of sound mind?"

"I object, Your Honor," said Peter.

"Sustained," said the judge.

"Your Honor," replied Bentley. "I am trying to find out if this young man is in complicity with the defendant or if he has a touch of the same mental sickness."

"Objection, Your Honor," said Peter.

"Sustained," said the judge. "Mr. Bentley, I warn you. I do not like the way you are proceeding with your questions or allusions."

"I saw what I saw, screamed the young man. What I said is true. Ask the others that were on the boat. They will tell you."

"Calm down, young man," said the judge. "Any other questions, Mr. Bentley."

"No, Your Honor. I can tell where this case is going. No matter what I say, your mind is already made up."

The judge seemed insulted. "One more remark of the kind, Mr. Bentley, and I will charge you with contempt."

Bentley returned to his seat showing total displeasure. Peter also returned to his seat. The young man was excused, and he returned in the audience. The judge looked at Bill and said, "Mr. Morison, are the events reported by Seaman Clark true? Did it happen?"

"Yes, Your Honor," answered Bill.

"How could you have produced and destroyed a water spout?"

"I do not know, Your Honor. I had the inspiration and the power."

"Mr. Morrison, the court remains confused. But I see no reason to keep you in captivity. You are definitely a different type of person, but it does not mean, in my mind, that you are insane and dangerous to yourself or to the general population. You are free to go."

Peter stood up and said, "Your Honor, we thank you, and we have a request."

"What is it, Mr. Stewart?"

"Your Honor, the Coast Guard took possession of the sailboat belonging to Mr. Morrison. He would like his boat back. We need to know where the Coast Guard is keeping the vessel 'SeaLove.' We also need to get back all the documents and things the Coast Guard took out of the boat. For example, Passports, clothing, and money."

"Motion granted," said the judge. "Mr. Bentley, do you know where the Coast Guard has taken the boat?"

"Yes, Your Honor. The boat is at the Coast Guard Station in Cape Canaveral. I can ask the Coast Guards to tow the vessel to a public marina."

"Your Honor, may I consult with my client?" asked Peter.

"Yes, you may."

"What do you think, Bill? Where do you want them to take the boat?"

"The best place would be Cape Canaveral Marina. They are equipped to take the boat out of the water and have a nice, big yard, where the boat can be repaired."

"Your Honor," said Peter, "if at all possible, we would like the boat to be taken to Cape Canaveral Marina. It is near the Coast Guard Station."

"Very well," said the judge. "Mr. Bentley, can you see to it?"

"I think so, Your Honor."

"It's only natural that Mr. Morrison would want his boat and his things back," said the judge. "It is so ordered. You are invited to prepare the proper documents. I will sign them."

"Thank you, Your Honor," said Peter.

"Thank you," said Bill.

"The court is dismissed."

Bill had predicted the exit from the courthouse. It happened exactly the way he had forecasted. People were pushing and pulling, trying to get close to him. The journalists wanted an interview or at least a few comments. Others wanted to be healed from their misery or ailments. The police did a good job of escorting the three men toward a yellow cab. Carl Spencer had a first moment of glory. He told the other newsmen that he would prepare a press conference.

Chapter 19

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill, Peter, and Carl

As they boarded the taxi, the three men did not notice the tall and slim man who was following them. He was dressed in black, moved slowly and carefully until he made his way close to the departing taxi. He noted the license plate number and wrote the information on a little pad. He stared at the back of the taxi until it turned left at the junction of Church Avenue.

"I wonder," he said softly. "Not another one..."

"Are you talking to me?" asked a young woman standing next to him.

"No, no, I'm not. I was talking to myself." He walked away and crossed the street. His car was parked under Interstate 4.

Meanwhile, Bill, Peter, and Carl were heading toward Peter's office in Winter Park. "I have never been so confused in my life," said Carl. "What the hell is really going on? I don't get it."

"What don't you get?" asked Peter.

Bill remained silent, observing the road and listening to the conversation. Jeff Rodriguez, the taxi driver, was also showing interest.

"I don't get anything," replied Carl. "What kind of boat are we in?"

"I was in my sailboat when this whole thing started," said Bill, smiling. "I am not quite sure myself. I do not control the events. A powerful force within me totally takes charge of my mind whenever it wants' to. If I don't need help, I feel like myself. If something challenges me, the force takes over. I don't know how your son was healed, Peter. The force took controls of my thoughts and actions. I heard the words that came out of my mouth. I have no idea where the words came from and why I said what I said."

Peter noticed that the taxi driver had slowed down and was paying more attention to what Bill was saying than he was his driving.

“Why don’t we pursue this conversation in my office? We will be there in a few minutes.”

When they arrived at the office, Peter asked his secretary to bring them some coffee and informed her that they did not want to be disturbed for any reason.

“Coffee won’t do it for me,” said Carl. “It’s almost two o’clock, and I’m hungry.”

“OK,” said Peter. “Would a pizza make you happy?”

Before Carl could reply, Peter asked his secretary to order a large pizza with everything on it. They entered Peter’s office. It was an impressive workplace with expensive furniture and décor. It had a triple bay window overlooking Park Avenue, the most touristic and commercial street in Winter Park. Peter did not sit behind his desk. He took place in one of the four sofa-chairs surrounding a beautiful teak table. The other two also took place around the table.

“Let’s start the meeting after Yvette comes in with the coffee,” suggested Peter.

“That’s good,” said Bill. “I am in no hurry.”

“I’m in a hurry to get the pizza,” added Carl.

“It should be here in less than half an hour. You know,” continued Peter, “these last two days have been something else. It feels like I’m dreaming.”

“Feels like a dream to me also,” said Bill. “Sometimes I wonder if I am still on my sailboat and having an illogical nightmare. I would prefer to be having a bad dream. I could wake up and find myself sailing away on SeaLove. I would get out of the cabin, stretch in the cockpit, look at the beautiful sea. Cynthia

would be near the bow, totally naked as usual, looking forward toward the horizon!”

“And then, what would you do?” asked Carl.

“I would softly walk toward her, put my hands on her breasts, force her to turn around, and would kiss her like I never kissed anyone before.”

Before Bill could continue, Yvette came in with the coffee. “I ordered the pizza, Mr. Stewart. It should be here in about twenty minutes.”

“Thank you, Yvette,” said Peter.

“Great,” said Carl.

Yvette left Peter’s office. Carl said,

“I’ll tell you what, Bill! For a holy man, you seem quite horny to me.”

Bill and Peter laughed.

“I am not a holy man,” said Bill. “I’m merely a prophet!”

“Holy man, prophet, what’s the difference? You should be an example of holiness, chastity, good thoughts. You should be talking about God, religion, and devotion. You know? The things real prophets talk about. You should not be expressing your desires to grab woman’s breasts. I should be talking that way. Hum, of course, I need to get the girl first!”

The three men laughed together. The tension between them was slowly melting away.

“You got it all wrong. A prophet is not necessarily a holy man. I am a man, just like you. A man with a mission. A man with a message to deliver. A man that is horny as hell, as you just said...”

Peter interrupted this amicable exchange between Carl and Bill: "Now, Bill, last night we talked about Cynthia. You asked me to get her out of jail. Is that the first thing you want me to do?"

"Well, it would be the second thing you do for me. You helped me today. Anyway, we have to get Cynthia out of jail; the poor girl suffered enough. She and I planned a sailboat trip around the world, and she ended up in jail. We have to get her out."

"I'll work on it first thing in the morning. I'll try to get an appeal for her. It should not be too difficult. First, I must study her dossier and then I will meet her. She'll have to accept me as her attorney."

"When you first meet her, she may give you a hard time and make a few unpleasant remarks. That's the kind of person she is. I'm sure you can convince her."

"I'll tell her that you were lost at sea for two years and that the first thing you did when they found you was to inquire about her. You hired me to get her out of jail. I won't mention anything about you being a prophet, your mission, and your newfound powers."

"Reasonable," said Bill. "I will deal with her once she gets her freedom."

Yvette gently knocked at the door, entered, and placed the open pizza box in the center of the table. She gave each of the men a plate and a couple of napkins and asked, "Anything else I can do for you, gentlemen?"

"That should be it," replied Peter. "Would you like a point of Pizza?"

"No thank you. I already had lunch. She smiled and walked out of the room."

"Well," said Carl. "You trained her well. She is cute. I like these long legs. Is she married?"

"No she is not," said Peter. "But she has a boyfriend. She has been working here for a couple of months. I didn't have to train her. She's quite efficient."

"One of these days," replied Carl, "you should introduce me formally. Let me get one point of this pizza. It looks yummy!"

They all reached for the pizza and ate in silence for a few minutes.

"Very good," said Carl. "Tasty with just enough spices. Thank you, Peter. Now, what about Yvette. Will you officially introduce her to me?"

Peter smiled and replied: "You can introduce yourself." Turning his attention to Bill, he added, "OK Bill, I know what I have to do. Now, before Carl attacks my secretary, what assignment do you have for him?"

"Carl," answered Bill. "I would like you to prepare a small press conference."

"Where do you want to hold this conference?"

"I will leave the location up to you."

"How many persons should we have? Should it be open to the general public?"

"No, it should be a small conference with only members of the media."

"How do you see the format of this conference?" asked Peter.

"I see no more than fifteen to twenty journalists or reporters. One of you would introduce me. I would make a small speech and would take a few questions."

"Will you make some kind of miracle?" asked Carl. "You know, to impress the press and place us on the first page."

"I don't know, Carl. It will depend on the questions and on whatever Life wants me to do."

"What will you tell them?" continued Carl. "What will you say to convince them that you're not a fraud?"

"I will tell the truth as I know it," Carl.

"Answer me honestly, Bill. All the things you said in court, is it the whole story? I want to work with you and for you, but I must say that I am not sure. Hum... I'm not sure I believe you."

"The healing of my son is not sufficient for you?" asked Peter.

"In a way it is, and in a way it is not. I don't know your son. This could be some kind of a setup. A publicity stunt! I am not convinced. I'm not letting you down, Bill. I will prepare your press conference, but..."

"But you do not believe. I don't blame you. I don't believe what is happening to me either. I understand, Carl. If you want to leave, you may. I would walk away from this new life of mine if I could. I want to be the Bill Morrison I used to be."

"Let me tell you something, Carl," said Peter. "My son was really sick. He was dying. There is not setup here. No games, no stunts. I don't understand what is happening either, but unlike you, I have faith. Bill has become who he says he has become."

"You know," commented Carl, "should I tell my family and friends that I believe in you, they will all laugh at me."

"The most courageous act in life is to think for yourself. If you know the truth, you can let them laugh," replied Bill.

The men were talking, eating the pizza, and drinking coffee. Carl reached to refill his cup of coffee. The cup was full to the rim. "That's strange," he said. "I drank most of my coffee. Did one of you refill my cup?"

"Not I," said Peter.

"Not me," said Bill.

"Oh well," concluded Carl. "I must have refilled it without paying attention during our conversation. I think I'm going to have one more piece of pizza and..."

Carl reached for the pizza and became totally silent. Bill and Peter looked in the same direction. They were both amazed. With the exception of one point, the pizza was complete.

"That's impossible!" said Carl. "There were nine pieces. I ate at least two."

"There you are, Carl," said Peter. "This was either another cheap trick or Bill is who he says he is."

"So," said Carl, "you are like Christ, multiplying the bread and the wine? Or the coffee and the pizza?"

"Maybe, but I didn't do this. It happened by itself."

"Well, I go with Peter. It's probably a cheap trick. You guys are trying to dupe me."

"What will it take to convince you?" asked Peter.

"Well, I believe that Bill is exceptional, but I am not sure about this last messenger or last prophet story.

"Maybe we should call you Thomas instead of Carl!"

During this exchange between Carl and Peter, Bill was looking out the window.

"What are you looking at?" asked Peter.

"The bird, the bird in the tree across the street."

Both Peter and Carl looked out the window. "What is so special about that bird?"

"Nothing and everything. He seems so free!"

"You are a strange man, Mr. Bill," said Carl. "I don't know about you. Can you make a miracle I can believe in?"

Bill looked at him and asked: "Can't you see without your spectacles Carl?" Asked Bill. "How long have you been wearing glasses?"

"All my life I think. Why?"

"Can you see without them?"

"Are you kidding? I can't see anything. Well, I see forms and blurry colors, but that's about it."

"Stand in front of me," asked Bill. "Place your hands into mine."

"Bill, I did not know you cared!" said Carl, laughing.

Somewhat intrigued, Peter was watching without saying anything. He knew something unusual was about to happen. Still laughing, Carl walked toward Bill and placed his hands in Bill's hands. Bill squeezed with force. Carl felt a little strange, a little dizzy. He rapidly lost his smile and became concerned.

"You're hurting me, man!"

Bill focused into Carl's eyes like a mad man. He was trembling and prodigiously sweating. He seemed to be in deep pain. Carl was experiencing similar discomfort. His eyes were burning. His head was ready to burst a blood vessel.

"Close your eyes," suggested Bill.

Carl did as he was told. Bill was quivering. Peter was watching. Carl heard the words he would never forget.

"Remove your glasses, Carl. You do not need them anymore."

"What are you saying, Bill?"

"He's saying you do not need glasses anymore," repeated Peter.

"I don't need glasses anymore? Can I open my eyes?"

Carl's discomfort was rapidly fading away.

- "Of course," said Bill. "It's the only way to experience your new eyesight!"

"What if it doesn't work?"

"Open your eyes, Carl," said Peter.

Carl opened his eyes. First he was shocked. Everything looked so different: sharpness, colors, depth of field. He looked at everything around him. He looked outside. "It worked. I can't believe it. Wow, man!"

He approached Bill, fell on his knees, and placed his hands on Bill's legs. "Thank you. Now I believe, wow, I can see better than I ever did before. It's fantastic!"

Peter and Bill looked at each other and were quite amused by Carl's reaction. He was like a child with a new toy. Bill seemed drained.

"Are you not feeling well, Bill?" asked Peter.

"I am fine. Just a little tired. These healings take a lot of energy out of me."

Peter and Carl looked at Bill for a few seconds.

"Let's get serious," said Peter. "It is obvious. You have become the man you say you are. God, the Creator or whatever power made you a prophet, gave you knowledge and powers. You have a mission to accomplish. For some unknown reason, Carl and I have become a part of your mission. Is this about right?"

"It seems to be the case," said Bill.

"Now that I can see so well, I will be devoted to you forever. Do you know what your mission is?" asked Carl.

"Not quite. I know that Life is troubled by mankind's behavior. I know that Life is preparing the apocalypse. Mankind must change or mankind will no longer be."

"If we tell that story to the people of this country," said Carl, "we will become their laughing stock."

"Does the eagle, flying high up in the sky, mind what the crawlers of the earth think about him?" replied Bill.

"Well," said Peter, "we have quite a battle on our hands."

"OK," said Carl, "I'm in. I believe. I can see! What's next?"

Carl walked to the closest mirror and looked at himself. "I am so handsome without glasses. Wow-we." He ran to the office door, opened it, and walked toward Yvette.

"Tell me, pretty lady, do you see anything different about me?"

She was surprised by the question. "Well, no, I mean, I can't tell. What is it?"

"When I came in, I was wearing thick, heavy glasses! Look at me now!"

Yvette did not really know what to answer to this overly exited man.

"Come back in here, you clown," said Peter. Both he and Bill were laughing.

Carl returned to the office and closed the door behind him.

"Thank you, Bill. Oh man, Thank you! But, tell me, how can you possibly do all that you do?"

"A normal human being uses, at best, only 10 to 15% of his mental capacity. Somehow, after my two years lost at sea, I am now able to reach a much higher level of cerebral potency." Now Carl, continued Bill. "You do not need to thank me anymore. Show your gratitude by helping me."

"I'm ready. Whatever you want, Bill."

Bill looked at the other two, then looked outside for a few seconds. They respected his silence.

"I will take a few days off from my mission. I need to take care of myself, find a hotel, rest a little, cleanup, get a haircut, get some new clothes, check on my boat... The first thing I must do is rent a car."

"Do you have any money?" asked Peter.

"Not on me," replied Bill, "but I have a secured saving account at Bank of America. I also have money and a few credit cards aboard SeaLove..."

"Yaw," interrupted Carl, "if the Coast Guards did not get these things off your boat."

"You'll find out soon enough," said Peter. "Meanwhile, let me give you a couple of hundred dollars and a corporate credit card. It will help you get what you need."

"Peter, you don't have to give me money."

"That is true," said Carl. "All Bill has to do is ask Life, and he could become a millionaire."

"Life brought us together so I can take care of the finance," said Peter. "On top of that, I prefer to help Bill than give money to the doctors."

"Talking of money," asked Carl, "did you not say you would help me with my finances? I have to pay a few things including my rent."

"I did," said Peter. "How much do you need?"

"I hate to say it, but hum... \$2000 would help me get out of my present hole."

"Then, \$2000 it is."

Peter used the intercom and asked Yvette to write a check of \$2000 to the order of Carl Spencer and also to rent a car in the name of their law office.

"What kind or size car would you prefer, Bill?"

"It does not really matter..."

"Yes, it could. You may have to carry things or bring a few persons with you. Let me get you a small van. It will be the most practical car for you."

"If you say so, Peter. But you really don't have to..."

"Yes, I do," interrupted Peter. "Yvette, get a small van. Tell them we want to rent it by the month."

"Thank you, Peter," said Bill.

"You have already done so much for me and my family and, of course, Carl." Peter hesitated a minute. "OK, well, why don't we meet back here in two days, let say, around 2:00 p.m.?"

"Works for me," said Bill. "By the way, Carl, please do not mention to anyone that your sight was improved through my intermediary. I don't want to compete with the ophthalmologists. They need to make a living too."

"I understand," answered Carl.

“Right,” said Peter. “We don’t want to put the optometrists out of business either. A few of them are my clients.”

A few minutes later, each man went on their respective way. Bill left aboard a gray Ford van. Carl took a cab to bring him back at the courthouse, where he had left his car. Peter stopped at the front and said to Yvette: “You won’t believe what is going on. The tall man who just left the office, he is a prophet—the last prophet!”

“How do you know? Because he says so?”

“He saved my son’s life, and just a few minutes ago, he gave Carl the gift of twenty-twenty sight.”

“Oh, is that’s what happened?”

“Do not take this information out of the office. It is very confidential!”

“I understand.”

Chapter 20

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: We Meet Father McLane/Bill Is Free

The man in black we encountered in the previous chapter was a high-ranking diplomat of the influential power group known as the Illuminati. This historical society still governs the world through governments, corporations, and religions. The Illuminati also include other mighty societies such as the Masons, the Zionists, the Committee of 300, and even some secret groups of the Vatican. They are hierarchically linked together.

The man called himself Father McLane. He often pretended to be an envoy from Rome, mostly involved in delicate and controversial situations implicating the church. After watching Bill's taxi drive away, Father McLane drove his rented car to the Saint James Cathedral in Orlando. He requested an audience with the Most Reverend Bishop Ballard of the diocese of Orlando.

Father McLane was rapidly taken to the bishop's office. The two men knew each other but were far from being friends. Father McLane had no respect for Bishop Ballard and the bishop feared Father McLane.

"Good afternoon, Most Reverend."

"Good afternoon, Father McLane. What gives me the honor of your visit?"

"The church may have another troublesome adversary, Most Reverend Bishop. He is in your diocese."

"Are you sure?"

"Did you not read the morning paper? There was a long article about the man who calls himself the last prophet."

"I did read the article. I figured the man passed too much time under our beautiful Florida sun."

"The article stated that he accomplished a few miracles. I was at the courthouse today and heard a few testimonies. It seems that our man has some God-given or diabolic capability."

"I must admit that I did not pay much attention."

"I think we need to keep an eye on him, follow him, and find out a little more before we advise the Vatican."

"Sounds reasonable. Where is he now?"

"He boarded a taxi with his Attorney Peter Stewart and some journalist. I guess they were going to Stewart's office in Winter Park. If you don't mind, I will find the right address and then contact St. Mary Church in Winter Park. I'll ask for one of the priests to become our man's shadow."

"It is of good judgment. We need to know where he will be going but mostly what he will be doing and saying."

- "Thank you, Bishop. I'll keep you informed."

Bill was happy to finally be free and by himself. It had only been seven days since the Coast Guards took him off SeaLove. It seemed like a year. Now, he was free to do what he wanted. He still did not comprehend what had happened to him and he may never. At this present moment, it did not matter. He was at liberty; on the loose.

Bill knew the cities of Winter Park, Orlando and the area quite well. He decided to drive to the Altamonte Spring Mall, where he would acquire some of the basic things he needed. He wouldn't buy too much. Most of his things were probably still be on SeaLove.

"Damn, I'm driving, and I don't have a driver license. I better be careful. In fact, I don't have any form of identification. My lawyer should have thought of that."

Once at the mall, Bill had his hair washed and trimmed. He decided to keep his hair shoulder length. The young female

hairstylist suggested: "Your hair is so long and nice. You are way too young to have white hair. Would you like me to color it?"

"No thank you. I had to go through a lot to get such white hair. I will keep it that way."

He had his beard trimmed. He decided to keep his facial hair reasonably long.

"How a prophet dresses, he wondered. All in black? All in white? A suit? A long robe, the style they wore during the time of Jesus? Power of life, won't you guide me? I do not know what I should wear or shop for."

In the absence of an answer, Bill decided to dress as a sailor. A sailor he was, a sailor he would remain. He bought the following: two pairs of shorts, one white, one black; two pairs of long pants, one white, one black; two shirts, one white, one black and a third shirt with sailing designs; white socks and two pairs of boat shoes. From the pharmacy, he purchased toothbrush, toothpaste, soap, towels, and an electric razor specially designed to trim long facial hair.

Bill had dinner around six o'clock. Following a satisfactory meal, he returned to his car. He decided to drive to Cape Canaveral and find a room there.

"Tomorrow morning, I will be close to the Coast Guard's office and to SeaLove," he said to himself.

He took less than one hour to drive the sixty some miles to his destination. Bill never noticed that someone was following him.

By 7:30 p.m., he had selected a hotel and was set in his room; Bill decided to go out and take a walk. It was a pleasant summer evening. He looked toward the east and toward the ocean. He noticed the rise of the darkness and the arrival of the stars.

"I should be on SeaLove."

He observed the slow displacement of a falling star.

"Falling star, falling star, come and get me," whispered Bill.

Across the street from his hotel, Bill noticed a small strip mall. He looked at the different boutiques facing him. He noticed one particular store with the sign "steam bath and massage" written in bright red letters in the front window.

"A massage, a good massage, that's what I need."

He leisurely walked to the salon. As he entered and closed the door behind him, he never sensed the eyes watching him from across the street.

"Are you here for a massage?"

She was a tall, slim, and attractive woman, probably in her forties. She wore in a long gray robe, falling almost to her bare feet. Her long slender arms and shoulders were bare. She was exposing a deep cleavage. Her breast seemed large and full. Her brown hair was short, almost a boyish cut.

"Absolutely," said Bill.

"Would you like a half-hour treatment or a full hour?"

"A full hour," replied Bill.

"A full hour will cost \$80."

"That's acceptable."

"Please follow me."

She led him through a second door and carefully closed it behind Bill.

"Will you be my masseuse?"

"If you want me to. There are only two of us here at this time. If you wish to meet our other lady, I will be pleased to introduce her to you."

"No," said Bill. "I will be happy to be your patient."

"Good, my name is Millie. Please follow me."

Millie was pleasant and sounded well educated. She escorted Bill to a small room situated at the back of the building. She opened the door and let him enter first. She followed him and closed the door behind her. The room contained a few old faded pictures on the walls, a massage table with easy access on each side, a little desk with a stereo system, and one chair.

"What's your name?"

"Bill."

"Nice to meet you, Bill. I like your hair. Would you like to take a shower or visit our steam bath room before your massage?"

"Both," said Bill. "I think I would like to take a steam bath first and then a shower."

"Very well, we start counting time only when the massage starts. We are not charging you for the shower or the time you will spend in the steam bath."

"Thank you."

"I will leave you while you make yourself comfortable. Please place your clothes on that chair and wrap this towel around you. Oh, by the way, I need to collect \$80 from you."

Bill paid the amount and realized he did not have much money left. He had paid for most of his purchases and for the hotel room with Peter's credit card. The haircut and the thirty-five-dollar dinner were paid in cash. He did not want to use the credit card for a massage. What he was doing tonight was nobody's business.

After receiving the money, Millie said: "I will be back shortly."

"Please do!"

She left the room.

Bill undressed and surrounded his waist with the long white towel. A minute later, Millie gently knocked at the door.

“Are you ready?”

“Yes,” replied Bill.

“Please follow with me,” said Millie.

She preceded Bill toward the steam bath, directly opposite to massage room number three. She opened the glass door and invited Bill to enter. As he stepped in, she firmly grabbed the back of the towel and pulled it away from her client. He looked at her. She smiled. “How long would you like to spend in the steam bath?”

“About fifteen minutes. Is that reasonable?”

“I will let you out in fifteen minutes.”

She closed the door and walked away. She returned precisely fifteen minutes later and faced Bill with the towel extended between her hands. “Did you enjoy the steam bath?”

“Fantastic,” Bill answered while replacing the towel around him.

“Ready for your shower?”

“Totally. This time, you don’t have to pull the towel from me. I will hand it to you.”

She laughed. “Did I offend you?”

“No, but you surprised me.”

“Sorry... here is the shower room and here is a fresh bar of soap for you. May I have your towel, please?”

“Hum... Hum...”

Bill spent about five minutes in the shower. He felt relaxed and ready for his massage. He stepped out of the shower. Millie was there to hand him the towel. He noticed that she never looked down at him and kept her eyes focused on his eyes. He

smiled, she smiled back. She led him back to the massage room and let him enter first.

“Lay face down on the table and keep the towel over your buttocks. I will be back as soon as you are ready. Just call me. I will be on the other side of the door.”

She left the room one more time. Bill did as she asked and called her. She entered the room, dimmed the light very low, and pushed down the start button on the stereo player. The music was low and soft. She approached Bill and softly whispered: “Would you like me to use oil, powder, or nothing at all?”

She gently placed both her hands on his back. At the touch of her, Bill had a few goose bumps.

“Oil will be just fine. Thank you for asking.”

“Oil may leave a pleasant smell on you. Your wife may ask questions.”

“I don’t have a wife or anybody to be jealous about what I do. Oil will be fine.”

“Good, good. Last question. Would you like a soft massage or a deep tissue massage?”

“Deep tissue.”

She trickled a few drops of oil all over his back. Her soft hands became powerful and for half an hour covered the full back side of her client. The massage was professional, almost virginal. As Millie massaged one side of Bill’s rear end, she covered the other side with the towel. Occasionally her finger went deep inside the upper thighs. The tip of a finger at times lightly touched the bottom of the scrotum. It seemed unintentional. Bill was deeply relaxed, almost sleeping when she said: “Turn around, Bill, let me work on the other side of you. Are you enjoying the massage?”

“Yes, it’s simply marvelous. You are fantastic.”

Bill turned around. She made sure the towel was covering his genitals. Once he turned over, she was on his right side, gently smiling and looking at his eyes. He took her left hand and gently kissed it.

“Thank you. You are very sweet.”

“Good. Close your eyes and relax.”

She poured oil on him. She initiated the front massage from his face, progressed to the shoulders, the arms, and the chest. Her hands firmly danced on him and reached a few inches below the navel. Bill’s manhood reacted; she noticed. She left the torso and went down to work on the feet, the legs, the thighs, and the upper thighs. As she had done for the buttocks, she covered one side on the body with the towel while massaging the other side. Up on each thigh, near the groins, she had a few random touches of the genitals. Bill raised his mast. She smiled and kept him covered.

“We are done,” she whispered, “unless...”

“Unless?”

She brought her face close to his, gently applied a light kiss on his lips, and continued: “Unless you want me to take care of your growing boy, down there.”

She rose up and looked at him with a question mark on her face.

“It would cost fifty dollars more for a hand job, seventy-five for a blow job, and one hundred for me to sit on you.”

“That’s not good business for me,” said Bill. “You charged me eighty for the whole body, and you ask fifty to one hundred dollars for the little guy. By the pound, it doesn’t make sense at all.”

She was not expecting that answer. She stared at his face and at his extended penis.

"We can't leave him like that."

"I never pay for sex," said Bill. "Sexual affection is something I trade with a willing person. I will not pay you for this sort of service. But I will trade. Love my body, and I shall love yours."

"You want to have sex with me but do not want to pay?"

"And I would have sex with you and would not charge you anything. In a vulgar way, I have to say that my theory is ass for ass."

"Very well, I respect your opinion," said Millie in a dry tone of voice. "I will leave. You can get dressed."

She turned her back and walked toward the exit. She laid her hand on the door handle, paused for a moment, turned around, and looked at Bill. She peeped at the strong erection that was raising the towel over his body. Millie walked back to her client. She removed her robe, pulled off the towel, climbed on the table, placed one leg on each side of him, sat on him, and engorged his member deep inside of her.

"Do not move," he said. "Just feel the encounter of our flesh."

He examined her. She was a gorgeous woman. Gravity had started its course over her large breasts. He reached for them, held them in his hands, caressed her, felt her rapid heartbeat.

"Damn you. I want you as much as you want me. You get it for free. You are the only one of my clients who ever got it for free."

"I will give you as much as you will give me. Maybe more."

The improvised lovers expressed their passion in all possible ways until they both reached the supreme orgasm. They rested for a few minutes.

"Oh my god," she said. "This was unbelievable!"

"We made love," said Bill. "We were one body, one soul, if only for an instant."

They stayed inactive and motionless for a moment. Her body was on top of him, breathing in unison. She pulled herself away and said: "I have to go. My partner must be wondering what is going on. I have been in here way too long!"

"Why do you do this kind of work? You are such a lovely, lovable, and loving woman."

"I knew you would judge me. I don't have any choice. I need the money. I have obligations. This is the only thing I can do to earn the money I need."

Tears were falling from her eyes. She hit Bill violently on the chest. "You men are all alike. It is all right for you to have sex whenever you want, but for us women, we are whores to your eyes when we do the same."

"You only become a whore when you sell love or sex. When you love me the way you did, you are a beautiful soul. Our sexual encounter was the will and force of life."

"You don't know anything about me. I have a sick husband. He is a veteran, and he is crippled. The lower part of his body is totally paralyzed. He can't walk, he can't love, he lives in a wheelchair," said Millie, almost screaming. "This is the drama of my life. I have to make money to support him and myself. What the hell do you want me to do?"

Bill stood up, took Millie in his arms, and held her forcibly against him. "Calm down, Millie, I understand. Do you love your husband?"

"In my heart, I deeply do. But I am becoming heartless. You are right. I have become a whore."

"Look in my eyes, Millie, think about your husband, the good times you had together. Remember the day you met. Think of him in a loving way. Love him now with your heart, your mind, and your soul. Have faith, your husband may soon be well. Be happy with whatever life has left for you."

Millie looked at him, pulled herself away, grabbed her robe, and rushed out of the small room. She told the other masseuse that she could not work anymore that night. She rushed home. A few minutes later, Bill returned to his hotel. A young man, dressed in black, was in the lobby. Bill walked to the elevator. The man's eyes were fixed on his back.

Chapter 21

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill Finds SeaLove

The next morning, Bill got up around seven. He watched the news for a few minutes, picked up his suitcase, and headed down to the lobby. He smiled and saluted the young lady at the front desk. "I may be back tonight," said Bill to the young lady.

"Very well, sir. Have a great day."

"And may you also have a great day."

Bill noticed a man dressed in black, sitting by the window, reading a newspaper. Bill's photo was on the first page. He picked up a copy of the *Orlando Sentinel* and entered the hotel dining room. He took place at a small table and ordered coffee. He looked through the greasy menu.

The short, overweight waitress came to the table and said: "Y'all ready to order? What will it be?"

"Bring me two eggs sunny side up, corn beef hash, beans, and two slices of rye toasts, no butter on my toast."

She stared at him.

"Anything wrong?" asked Bill.

"Have you been here before?"

"No, this is the first time."

"I swear I saw your face before. Oh well!"

Bill read the front page article, except for the photo, there was not much to it.

"The last prophet was set free by Judge Stewart." A few lines of text reported the events and outcomes of the previous day.

The same morning, around nine thirty, Peter Stewart was in the waiting room of the Department of Correction. It was a room

set for the benefit of attorneys needing to confer with their clients. He stood to greet Cynthia.

"Are you Cynthia Flaherty?"

"Yes, who the hell are you and what do you want?"

"My name is Peter Stewart. I am an attorney. Somebody who cares about you hired me. We want to get out of here."

"Who the hell would that be? Oh, I know, Bill Morrison. Am I right?"

"Yes, you are, would you like to sit down?"

The small room had one wooden table, set in the middle and surrounded by four wooden chairs. Peter sat in one of the chairs and pointed to the chair in front of him where Cynthia took place. Peter opened his laptop and turned it on. Cynthia remained silent until he looked at her.

"So," said Cynthia. "Bill is still alive, and he finally remembers me? I have been here for almost two years. What a bastard!"

"Bill could not help you sooner. He was lost at sea. The Coast Guards only found him a little more than a week ago. He was also placed under arrest."

"So he was really lost at sea for all that time? Hard to believe. How did he survive?"

He will eventually share his adventure with you. Meanwhile, let's see what we can do to release you from this prison."

"I'm ready to leave this hellhole. What do you need from me?"

"I read your file. I know the story. I'm aware of what you did since you were in the hands of justice."

"They have no right to keep me here. I never did anything criminal."

"Probably true. But your attitude in court did not help you."

"They are the criminals, not me. I was almost killed in a bad storm. They rescued me and then treated me like a felon and made me a prisoner. Because I tried to protest against their illegal, stupid,

and unlawful attitude toward me, they sentenced me to this prison. It's not right!"

At this point, Cynthia was shouting.

"Calm down, Cynthia," said Peter. "I am here to help you. I will get you out."

"And do you know what else they did to me? What's your name?"

"Peter, Peter Stewart, you can call me Peter."

"Do you know what else they did to me?"

"What did they do?"

"They made me a whore, Peter. In order to survive, to get protection, I had to become a lesbian and have sex with ugly fat inmates. I had to satisfy certain guards, male and female, so that I could get certain advantages and not get beaten or sent to solitary. That's what they did to me. Just last night, this hideous woman held me and forced me to go down on her while this monstrous, repulsive fat man entered my back side. And on top of that..."

"Calm down, Cynthia, don't yell so loud. If they hear you, it could get worse."

"Are you getting me out of here now, today? Please, Peter, Get me out now..."

"I will get you out of this prison. I recorded everything you said, and I will present your statements to a judge."

Cynthia became totally unhinged.

"Oh my god, you are right. If they've heard me, what will they do to me while you are gone?"

"I will meet with the warden before I leave and ask for special protection."

"When will you be back?"

"In a few hours. Trust me and be good. I will get you out of here today."

After leaving the interview room, Peter requested a meeting with the warden. He was in luck. Prison Administrator Mason was available. Peter presented his case and asked the warden to listen to his recording.

"This is impossible, Mr. Stewart. These things do not happen in this penitentiary. This girl is totally mad. These statements are the inventions of a troublemaker and a sick mind."

"Whatever the case, Mr. Mason. I am placing this girl under your personal protection. If something bad happens to her while I am away, I will make your life a living hell."

"Are you threatening me?"

"No, sir, I am advising you and asking you. Make sure nothing harmful happens to Cynthia Faherty while I'm away." The warden changed his aggressive attitude and became more agreeable.

"I will do as you ask, Mr. Stewart. I will even help you get her out of here. If the court wants a recommendation from me, just ask. You are the son of Judge Martin Stewart, are you not?"

"Yes, I am."

"I know your father very well. He's a fair man."

"Thank you."

"After Ms. Faherty's release, what will you do?"

"I will investigate your prison and your system. I suggest you do the same. You should find out what's going on in this place while you are not looking. I trust that you are not involved?"

"I don't believe these things are happening in this prison. But I will investigate."

A few hours later, Cynthia was released from the prison and sent to Orange County jail, where she would stay until her next confrontation with a judge.

Meanwhile, on that very same day, Carl Spencer was visiting different media to inform the journalists about the press conference that Bill Morrison was planning. In general, he was well received but

not taken very seriously. Still, the members of the press were curious and accepted the invitation. The conference was to be held three days later at seven o'clock at night. Carl reserved a small meeting room of the Orange County Convention Center.

Around ten the same morning, Bill visited Cocoa Village Marina. Ken, the dock master, was behind his counter when Bill entered the clubhouse.

"Bill, is that you?" asked Ken. "I can't believe it!"

Ken was normally an unemotional and calm person. This time, his response to Bill's arrival was quite enthusiastic.

"Yes, it's me Ken. All in one piece."

"Man, we were all worried. Especially when the Coast Guards came here a few years ago. They said they had found your girlfriend. What was her name?"

"Cynthia."

"Yes, Cynthia. Anyway, we all thought you were dead, that is, until we heard the news a few days ago."

Bill walked toward Ken and they shook hands.

"What's with the beard and long hair?"

"It's my new style."

They both laughed.

"Well," asked Ken. "What happened?"

"A few bad waves. SeaLove capsized a couple of times and took back her normal position. During the event, Cynthia disappeared. I got knocked down, and two years later, the Coast Guards found me, not too far from the Northern Bahamas."

"That's it?"

"That's it," said Bill with a big ironical smile. "It's my way to make a long story short."

"What about that prophet thing?"

"That my friend is another story. It's an episode of my life I prefer to keep silent for the time being. But do not despair. You will soon have all the news. More than you will want to hear."

"OK," said Ken.

"Ken, I need to find SeaLove."

"I know where she is."

"Where?"

"She was taken to Cape Canaveral Marina yesterday. Charley, the yard manager, called me to ask what he should do with the boat. I told him to put her on dry dock and that someone would contact him shortly."

"Now, that's good news."

"I knew you would be pleased."

"What would you have done if I was really dead?"

"I would have bought the boat, got her repaired, and kept her in memory of a good friend."

"You are quite a guy, Ken, thank you."

"At Cocoa Village Marina, we aim to please."

They both laughed. Bill added: "Don't mind me if I leave so quickly, but I have to visit SeaLove."

"I understand. Be ready for a shock. She may be in bad shape."

"I know, the last time I saw my poor boat, I almost cried. Thanks, Ken. I'll see you soon."

Bill knew the area very well. He covered the distance from Cocoa Village Marina to Cape Canaveral Marina in about fifteen minutes. He drove his car into the yard without stopping at the marina's office. It did not take him long to find SeaLove. She was the only sailboat without a standing mast and in such a pitiful shape. He looked at her with tears in his eyes.

"Don't worry, SeaLove, I will fix you. I don't know how. I don't know when, but if Life gives me time, I will bring you back to your glorious days."

Charley, the yard manager, noticed Bill standing by the most damaged sailboat he had ever seen.

"Do you know this boat or are you just looking at her."

"I know her. She's my boat."

"Oh, so you must be Bill Morrison. The guy the TV calls the last prophet?"

"That's me."

"Well, what's the story?"

"Keep listening to the TV. You will have all the answers. Let's talk about the boat."

"What do you want to do with her?"

"I want her restored. I want her back the way she was..."

"I don't know if she can be fixed. She is a real mess."

"Anything can be fixed."

"Yes, maybe... but is it worth it? It will be costly."

"I know. I will take care of the cost. I am well insured."

"It would probably be cheaper to buy a new one."

"I don't want a new one. I want SeaLove back."

"I'm not sure where to start. What should we do first?"

"Clean her, Charlie. Clean her good, in and out. Throw away all that is bad and repair what is still good."

They both looked at the boat for a while. Charlie said, "It's gonna take a lot of time."

"It's only time, Charlie."

"Yeah, but time is money. I will have to talk to my boss about this project. It will be costly."

"Talk to your boss. Tell him I want my boat repaired."

"He may ask for a deposit."

Bill pulled a business card from his pocket and gave it to Charlie.

"Tell him to get in touch with my lawyer. Once you know how much your boss will request to start the cleanup, contact us at this number. Don't start any repairs until the insurance appraiser sees the boat."

"You got it."

"Do you mind if I climb on board? I need some stuff out of the boat."

"Not a problem. Let me get you a ladder."

Charlie fetched a long aluminum ladder and leaned it upon SeaLove's port side.

"Thank you, Charlie."

"Be careful climbing up. The deck might be slippery!"

"I'll be cautious."

SeaLove's condition brought tears back to the eyes of her captain. He entered the cabin, and his despair grew even bigger. He looked around and gathered up a few things: boat shoes, shirts, jeans, shorts, and his favorite sunglasses. He placed these items in a traveling case. He noticed there were no legal documents and no money left on board. He threw the case overboard before coming down the ladder.

"Thanks, Charlie."

"No problem, man. Big mess in there?"

"Yes, quite a mess. Very sad to see."

"You still want to fix her?"

"More than ever."

"All right, here is the bag you threw down."

"Good, man. I will get all these things cleaned. It will be a good start."

"Good luck, Captain. Charlie removed the ladder and walked away."

Bill smiled, placed both his hands on SeaLove's filthy hull, and concluded: "If I live, you will live!"

Bill's next visit was at the US Coast Guard office. A young man received him. He was sitting behind a long counter.

"How can I help you, sir?"

"My name is Bill Morrison. A few days ago, the Coast Guard rescued my sailboat from the Atlantic. My boat was taken to Cape Canaveral Marina."

"Yes, sir?" said the young man somewhat interested. "What's your boat's name?"

"SeaLove. I had some papers in the boat like passports, documentations, credit cards, and money. I would like to get these items back."

"I understand, sir. Give me a minute. I'll see what I can find out."

The young man left the room and came back a few minutes later with a brown envelop.

"Everything should be in here. Will you please identify yourself and sign this receipt?"

"My passport should be inside the envelop. I need to get it out. May I look at the contents? I want to make sure all I need is here."

"Of course, sir."

Bill pulled the documents out the of the large envelop. He found his passport and Cynthia's passport, his four credit cards, his bank book, the vessel's document, the insurance policy, his driver's license and a few other papers of less importance. In a smaller white envelop he found less than \$200 in cash.

"Here is my passport. By the way, there is a lot of money missing?"

“Would you like to make a written report, sir? I can give you all the proper documents. Of course, you would have to prove how much money you had on board.”

Bill stared at him for a while and said, “I am not going to bother. Thank you, young man.”

“As you wish, sir. Have a good day, sir.”

Bill left the Coast Guard office and drove to the bank. It took him a while to identify himself and be recognized as the owner of a long-term saving account. He was told that all his credit cards had been cancelled and that his credit rating was very low. He explained his situation. The bank clerk sympathized with him. The bank account was still active. Bill withdrew two thousand dollars, requested and received a debit card. He had over two hundred thousand dollars left in the account.

Bill left the bank and never noticed the two men that were watching him as he stepped into his car.

Later in the day, Father McLane was talking with Bill’s shadow: “Well,” said Father McLane to the young priest. “Keep following him. I want to know where he goes and what he does.”

“Yes, Father. Father Herman and I will keep an eye on him.”

“Good. Call me daily with your report and anytime if anything interesting happens.”

Father McLane returned to his car and called Bishop Ballard: “Good afternoon, Father McLane. Anything new? Is our prophet flying high?”

“Not exactly, Most Reverend Bishop. He is acting pretty well like a normal citizen. Last night, he bought some clothes, had a good meal, rented a room near the east coast and visited a massage parlor. This morning he went to Cocoa Village Marina and then to Cape Canaveral Marina to visit his boat. His last stop

was at the bank. He just left. Your young priests are keeping an eye on him.”

“Well,” said Bishop Ballard. “I guess that our new prophet is just like the rest of us. You may be wrong about him.”

“I don’t think so. Either way, I will get in touch with you later.”

Chapter 22

Today or Maybe Tomorrow: Bill, Peter's Family, Carl and Cynthia

The next day, Bill and Peter were both on time for the scheduled two o'clock meeting.

"Well," asked Peter. "How did you enjoy your last two days?"

"It was just fine. But let me ask you. Did you meet with Cynthia?"

"Yes, I did. In fact, she is out of prison. Yesterday she was transferred to the Orange County Jail. This morning, she and I met Judge Carter. All went well. She is free."

"Good, very good. How does she look? How did she act?"

"I don't know how she looked two years ago, but she's a little on the rough side. She seemed tired, somewhat aggressive. She was very polite in front of the judge."

"I'm looking forward to seeing her."

"She comes across as being very angry with you."

"Hum, in many ways, she has the right to be."

"We will see," concluded Peter, "we are having dinner with her tonight."

"We are? Not in a public place, I hope."

"No, you are meeting her at my house."

"Your house?"

"Yes, it's about time you meet my family. My wife really wants to know you."

"Nothing would please me more. Oh! Here is a check for twenty-five thousand dollars. Pay yourself up and place the excess in escrow. I may eventually ask you to pay some bills for me. Also, I reported the accident to my boat insurance. They will send somebody to survey the boat in a couple of days. I told them to contact you."

Before Peter could answer, his secretary Yvette opened the door, pushed her head in, and said, "Mr. Spencer is here." Proud and jovial, Carl entered the room. Peter placed Bill's check in his desk.

"Hey, guys! Do I have great news or what?"

"We are fine," said Peter. "How are you?"

"I accomplished my mission. We are having our first press conference in two days, at seven o'clock at night, at the Orange County Convention Center. What do you think of that?"

"So soon," said Peter. "How can we be ready so soon?"

"That's great," reacted Bill. "Good job!"

"As I just said," asked Peter, "how can you be ready so soon?"

"He's a saint," suggested Carl. "He doesn't need to get ready."

"I am not a saint," replied Bill. "I am a prophet. Big difference. Anyway, as Carl said, I do not need much preparation. I don't know what I will say, and I will never know until we are on location. The words do not come from me. Life will inspire and guide me. That is all I know. But..."

"But?" asked Peter.

"I am not sure how I should dress for the event."

"God, you are worse than a woman. You could stay the way you are today," commented Carl.

"In shorts, boat shirt, and boat shoes?" asked Peter. "You must be kidding."

"Yes, I am," replied Carl. "I see him dressed in white—white shirt, white tie, white jacket, white pants, white socks, and white shoes."

"I don't agree," said Peter. "He should wear the accessories you mentioned but in black."

"Why in black," asked Carl. "Jesus was often dressed in white?"

Bill was laughing. "You guys are too much. Here's what I'll do. I will compromise. I will wear dark pants, black shirt, no tie, and a light jacket."

"Sounds good to me," said Peter.

"I'll go with that," added Carl.

"Good! So the conference is in two days. At what time should we be there?" asked Bill.

"I would suggest no later than five," retorted Peter.

"I agree," added Carl. "We will have two hours to get ready. By the way, I ordered fifty chairs and a podium. Audio visual services will install a couple of microphones. One for you and the other one I will walk over to whoever wants to ask a question."

"Sounds good," said Peter.

"I also ordered a table with water, coffee, sodas, and little things to snack on. As you can see, I accomplished my mission. Here is the contract. The Convention Center will want to be paid before the meetings start."

"I will prepare a check," replied Peter.

"What about you, Peter. How did you do with Cynthia?" asked Carl.

"She's free. She will have dinner at my house tonight. Bill will be there. Do you want to join us?"

"I would not miss it for a million dollars. It should be interesting. How does Cynthia feel about Bill?"

"I have the impression that she totally resents him."

"It's reasonable," said Bill. "I am indirectly responsible for all that happened to her..."

"Well, it was not really your fault!" expressed Carl.

"Anyway," continued Bill. "We will see how she reacts tonight. How should we dress?"

"Casual," said Peter. "Slacks and clean shirt will do."

"If Bill doesn't take Cynthia back, I may want to date her," said Carl while pointing his finger up in the air and offering a winning smile.

"First, you want my secretary, and now, you want Bill's ex-girlfriend?"

The three men laughed. Bill was the first to become serious.

"Before I leave," said Bill. "I want you both to remember this. If anything happens to me before or after the conference at the United Nations, take your respective family and friends to Aconcagua in Argentina."

"Why and what is this place?" asked Carl.

"It's the highest mountain in the Americas. It is 22,834 feet above sea level. It is located in the Andes Mountains in the province of Mendoza."

Around the same time, Father McLane was in Bishop Ballard's office.

"I have an idea," said Father McLane. "There is an easier way to shadow our prophet."

"What do you have in mind?"

"It seems to me that our man likes to spend time with womankind."

"And?"

"Consequently, we should introduce one in his life. I am talking about a gorgeous female, a tempting and intelligent seductress. A professional temptress!"

"Like a Delilah?"

"Exactly!"

"My questions would be who, how, and when?"

"Who? She will be easy to find. In our intelligence or let's say, our espionage bureau, we have some quite outstanding females. They would do anything to protect the church."

"I knew there were monks who would kill or die for the church, but..."

"Yes, my dear Bishop. We also have sisters that are just as devoted."

"An interesting and almost perverted idea," commented Bishop Ballard, pensive. "Where do they keep these operatives?"

"Different locations around the world."

"I can't say that I favor your ways. Are you determined to proceed with this clandestine operation?"

"I think so. Do you have any objection?"

"Of course, I do. It is not the role of the church to support such furtive activities."

"Bishop, the church always needs protection against any actions by individuals, groups, or organizations. The main purpose of our powerful hidden force is to keep the herds or the masses under control. A few centuries ago, when the church was challenged, we created the inquisition. Many rebels had to be executed. It is because of our methods, our ways, and resources that your church is still in existence."

"We are no longer living in the middle ages."

"True, but in the last century, Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits and the head of the inquisition was canonized by the Vatican. The faithful now call him Saint Ignatius of Loyola. In this country, we even have a few universities named after him: Loyola University in Chicago and Loyola University in New Orleans led by the Jesuits of course."

Bishop Ballard decided to remain silent. To challenge his opponent could only be dangerous. This fanatic sitting in front of him was a religious Mafia enforcer.

"I am going to call a contact in New York. If he shares my idea, we will act in accordance with my plan. May I use your phone, Most Reverend?"

A few minutes before seven o'clock, Bill arrived in front of a large, sumptuous home set at the end of a cull-de-sac. Before going to the front door, he walked around the house. The ageless mansion was set right at the edge of a small lake. It was surrounded by trees and flowers.

"No doubt, these people live well," murmured Bill.

At precisely seven o'clock, he rang the front door bell. He did not have to wait long. The door opened and Judge Stewart was standing in front of him, grabbing and shaking his hand.

"Bill, Bill, how are you. So nice to see you again."

"I'm fine, Judge. How are you?"

"Good, good, young man. Please come in."

Bill heard the pitched voice of a hyper woman. "Is that him?" she yelled.

"Yes, Elizabeth. Our healer is here!"

Elisabeth ran to the door, pushed away her father-in-law, and through herself in Bill's arms. Surprised, Bill almost lost his balance. The closed door behind him prevented his fall to the floor.

"Thank you, thank you. You are our savior!"

Elisabeth had fallen to her knees and was extravagantly kissing Bill's hands.

"Give the poor man a chance to enter," suggested the judge.

Peter ran to the doorway, grabbed his wife, and pulled her up and away from Bill.

"I'm sorry, Bill," said Peter. "You are a hero around here. You will have to get used to it."

Still utterly surprised by the reception, Bill asked: "How is Francis? Is he out of the hospital yet?"

Before anyone could answer, Bill heard the loud and distinctive voice of Cynthia.

"Well, if you are so smart, you should have the answer to your question, you bastard!"

She ran to him and slapped him with her right hand and again with her left hand. Bill did nothing to stop her. He only looked in her eyes.

Cynthia appeared much older and much thinner. She had lost the desirable advantages she had over many other women.

“You are a pig, I tell you!”

The judge, Peter, and Carl pulled her away from Bill.

“Control yourself, young lady,” said Peter, “or I’m going to ask you the leave this house immediately.”

“You won’t have to ask me out. I’m leaving on my own. I don’t want to be anywhere close to that pig.”

The judge looked at Bill and asked, “This girl hit you twice in front of witnesses. Would you like to file charges?”

“Of course not, Judge. She has the right to be upset with me.”

Bill turned toward Cynthia, who was escorted to the door by Peter.

“I am very sorry, Cynthia. If you ever need help or something from me, I will be there for you.”

“Go to hell, bastard. You are no good. You’re not even a good captain! Will somebody at least call me a taxi? I don’t even know where the fuck I am.”

“Just stay by the curb,” said Peter. “I’ll call a cab.”

“I don’t have any money.”

Bill handed her all the money he had in his wallet. She took it, spat in his face, and ran away. Elisabeth grabbed Bill’s hand and led him into the living room. In her mid-thirties, Elisabeth was a fairly good-looking woman. She was tall and slim with hardly an ounce of fat on her. The observation included the breasts. They seemed remarkably absent. Even without certain women’s attribute, Elisabeth remained an attractive female. Her face was well designed.

She had beautiful thick lips shaped for long comfortable kisses. Her hair was dark brown, graciously falling over her shoulders. She had a beautiful smile.

"This Cynthia is deranged," said Elisabeth. "She should be locked up. Talking to you the way she did, you the savior!"

"I am not the savior," responded Bill. "She has reasons to be angry with me."

"You saved my son's life. That makes you the savior in this house."

"That's enough, Elisabeth. You are thoroughly embarrassing our guest. Would you like something to drink, Bill?"

The judge gently pulled Elisabeth away from Bill.

"Thank you. Yes, Peter. I would like a rum and coke if at all possible."

"Always a sailor," commented Carl from the sofa across the living room.

"Coming up," said Peter.

The living room was well furnished with turn-of-the-century furniture. Beautiful paintings ornamented the walls. A wide and low chandelier was hanging from the high ceiling.

"The answer to your question is no," said Peter. "Francis is still in the hospital, but he is doing much better. The doctor says he should be home within a couple of weeks. They want to hold him under observation."

"That makes sense," replied Bill. "He will be fine..."

"Only because of you, Bill... !" interjected Elisabeth.

Trying to prevent another burst of emotion by Elisabeth, Carl interrupted by saying: "It was quite a scene we had here tonight. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. So, Bill and Peter, are we ready for the big conference?"

"Am I invited?" asked the judge.

"Of course you are invited," replied Peter. "But I don't know if your presence at the press conference would be a good idea. You are the judge that freed Bill, and your presence may be politically controversial."

"You are most likely right," said the judge. "What do you think, Bill?"

"I will leave the answer to you and Peter. You're the ones with political experience. As far as I am concerned, you are absolutely welcome."

"Hum...," said the judge. "I think Peter is right."

"Anyway," observed Carl. "All that will be done and said at the meeting will be in the media."

"Yes," replied the judge. "All the tainted information will be there. I do not trust the press, Carl!"

"It's OK, Judge. I don't trust the legal system of this country either."

Carl's remark brought a smile on everybody's lips. A few minutes later, the group was united around the dining room table. Overall, the meal was pleasant and enjoyable except for the embarrassing excess of fervor by Elisabeth. A few hours later, after multiple topics of conversation, the group returned to the living room for.

"Cognac, Bill?" Offered Peter.

"Yes, please. I have not had a cognac for the longest time."

"Well, you will like this one. It's an old Remy Martin. Anybody else for Cognac?"

With the exception of Elisabeth, they all shared god's elixir. Not counting the servants, Elisabeth was the only female in the house. She sat very close to Bill and kept staring at him. Bill pulled himself closer to Elisabeth, put his right arm around her shoulder, and placed a short kiss on her forehead.

“Don’t mind us, Peter. I think Elisabeth and I need to share a little paternal affection.”

Bill gently whispered: “Sweet Elisabeth, I understand how you feel. You are offering me the affection you will soon give your son. I am the instrument that revived your child. I am only an instrument. I am not God. I am not the savior. For you and your family, I want to be a friend. Please, consider me as a friend—nothing more, nothing less. Can we be friends?”

She pulled herself away from Bill’s arms, smiled, and said: “Yes, let’s be friends.”

“It is now time for me to go,” declared Bill. “I need to rest.”

“Where are you staying tonight?” asked Carl.

“The Orlando downtown Hampton Inn,” replied Bill.

“The Hampton Inn! Of all places. The prophets do not live in stables these days,” sarcastically and humorously commented Carl.

“I would go to a stable,” replied Bill. “But I didn’t know where to find one!”

After a few handshakes and thank-you, Bill and Carl stepped outside the house but not before Elisabeth placed a quick kiss on Bill’s cheek.

“What about me?” asked Carl. “Don’t I deserve a kiss?”

“You deserve two,” replied Elisabeth with a big grin. Carl received a kiss on each cheek. The judge and Peter were amused.

“Good night, Carl. See you tomorrow,” said Bill.

“Sleep well at your Hampton Inn. I am going back to my shack.”

Both men entered their respective vehicles and left for what would become their new way of living.

Part III

Chapter 23

Gizella, Yesterday and Tomorrow

Many people do not know that the city of Budapest is actually two different cities. There is the city of Buda and the city of Pest. Both cities face each other and are separated by the Danube River.

Many years ago, just before she turned thirteen, Gizella Bernadet Polgar participated in a life-changing event that affected her forever. Almost every day, during the late summer afternoon, her only brother Istvan, who was then sixteen years old, and his best friend Attila, who was two years older, would exit her sight and go hide somewhere. She asked her brother many times: "Where do you go, Istvan? Can I go with you?"

"Where we go is none of your business. It's a hideout for boys only."

Gizella was quite precocious and advanced for her age. She was mentally quick and physically remarkable. Her 5'2" body was well proportioned. She had a pretty face with deep brown eyes surrounded by long light auburn hair. Nature had favored her with a truly attractive female body.

Gizella and her family lived in the district of Kispest, one of the poorest areas of Budapest. The young teenager had a snooping nature and liked to spend time with her brother. One Friday afternoon, she decided to follow Istvan. The two boys walked around the corner, climbed over a small fence, went around an old white house, and entered a worn-out shed at the back of the yard. Attila pushed the door behind them, but it did not shut completely. Gizella stayed by the fence until the boys had gone in. She slowly walked to the shed and waited a few minutes before she opened the door.

Gizella could hardly see anything in the smelly structure. She looked around until her eyes became adapted to the dark area. She did not see the boys. She was ready to walk out when she heard voices. She walked across the doorway with great care. She did not want to step on anything that could hurt her or make noises. Once she reached the far side of the shed, she saw a small door on the left side. She progressed to that entry, disregarding her fast beating heart and her speculation about what would be on the other side. She could hear people talking and recognized the voice of her brother. She waited until the voices were a little louder. She carefully pushed the door halfway open. The room was almost completely dark. She walked in. At first, Gizella did not see anything in front of her. On her right side, there was a wall of boxes, one on top of the others and practically covering the whole length of what she figured was a stockroom. The boxes formed a divider. It seemed possible to progress around by walking forward. Between the boxes and the wall, there was just enough leeway for a thin person to crawl through. She prudently progressed between the boxes and the wall. She saw her brother and his friend sitting on the floor and facing each other. Both had their pants down and were engaged in mutual stimulation. Gizella kept watching as her brother lie on a blanket, face up. The other boy was kneeling and lowered his head. Gizella was horrified to see her brother's genitals totally swallowed up by the older boy. She could not avoid her reaction: "Oh my god! What are you two doing?"

Both boys were totally startled. Istvan reacted by saying, "What are you doing here?"

"I'm going to tell Mommy and Daddy!"

She stepped back. Attila stood up rapidly, raised his pants, rushed toward her, grabbed her arm, and pulled her inside their playroom. Meanwhile, Istvan was getting dressed.

"Gizella, what are you doing here?" asked Istvan for the second time. "Why did you follow us?"

"I wanted to know where you were going. I saw everything and I will tell everybody."

"What will you tell?" asked Attila.

"I will tell what I saw. What you boys do in here."

"What did you think we were doing? We were just playing."

"Yes," added Istvan. "We were playing doctor. You know. I always said I would become a doctor."

"That's it. We were playing. He was the patient, and I was the doctor."

Gizella tried to get away from Attila's grip, hesitated a second, and asked: "Can I play too?"

The two boys glanced at each other and looked at her.

"Sure!" said Attila. "The game will be a lot more fun with you around."

"I don't know," questioned Istvan. "That's my sister. She's only twelve."

"I will be thirteen very soon!"

"Gizella, if I let go of your arm, do you promise not to leave?"

"Sure. I don't want to go. I want to play with you guys."

Attila released Gizella and pulled Istvan aside.

"We don't have any choice. If she goes, she will tell, and we will be in big trouble. If we make her a part of the game, we can make her swear not to tell!"

"But she's my sister..."

"So what? She has to learn one day. Why not with us. On top of that, I like her. She's cute."

"I don't know."

"Stop being such a prude. We don't have any other solution anyway."

Istvan looked at his sister, not quite sure what to do. She made up his mind.

“Don’t be such a square, Brother. I want to play too!”

“OK then. But you have to swear secrecy. You cannot tell anyone about our meeting place and the games we play. Do you swear?”

“I swear. I will never tell.”

“Fine then, you can be part of our club. You can play with us.”

“Great!” added Attila. “But remember, if you tell, we will all be in big trouble.”

“Why?”

“Because old people are selfish. They want to be the only ones with the right to play this game.”

“They don’t want you to become a doctor.”

“They don’t want us to practice. You know them. Everything has to be their way.”

“When can I play?”

“We can play right now. Do you want to?” asked Istvan.

“Yes, I want to play. What should I do?”

Attila decided to take control of the game.

“Listen... Istvan will be the nurse, you will be the patient, and I will be the doctor.”

“I thought nurses were women?” protested Istvan.

“Some nurses are men. The best ones are men. You don’t want to be the nurse?”

“All right, I’ll be the nurse.”

“And you, Gizella, do you want to be the patient?”

“What do I have to do?”

“The nurse will help you undress, and you will lie down on the blanket. The nurse and I will give you a medical checkup.”

“I don’t know, man!” said Istvan.

"Carry on, nurse. We don't have all day. Prepare our patient."

Istvan approached his sister, looked in her eyes, and said, "Are sure you want to play this game?"

"Yes, I want to play. You don't want me to play?"

"I'll let you play with us. So take off all your clothes."

"You are supposed to help me!"

"I will help you. Let me undo the buttons at the back of your dress."

The dress was soon on the floor. Istvan kneeled and pulled her long stockings down. She was left with only her panties and brassiere. He removed her panties and faced a small and light hairy area.

"Turn around," said her brother.

She did. He stood up and removed her bra. Gizella was standing totally naked in front of the two boys who were both experiencing an intense sexual reaction.

"Now, lie down on the blanket, patient Gizella," commanded Attila.

The girl did as she was told. Attila leading the way, the two boys explored her young body. Her skin was tender and soft to the touch. Her breasts were small, well rounded and firm. Attila asked her to widen her legs so he could complete the examination. She did. Both boys were doctoring their patient. Attila's right hand and fingers caressed Gizella between the legs. With a light cry and a body constriction, she reached her first orgasm.

"You are very sick, Gizella," said Attila. "We have to give you an injection. Nurse, give our patient a mouth serum while I place an antibiotic in her lower abdomen."

Not thinking straight anymore, the two boys undressed and did as planned. A few minutes later, Gizella and the boys were no longer virgins.

Similar scenes were repeated many times until the end of the summer. One day, the owner of the shed entered the playroom while the three were totally naked and engaged in a wild threesome. The old man quickly left the premises and called the police. The young lovers escaped before the police arrived. The elderly knew who the culprits were and gave their names to the authorities.

At eighteen years of age, Attila was an adult. He was arrested and prosecuted. Istvan and Gizella were minors. They were not legally prosecuted but had to deal with their parents. Gizella confessed everything while Istvan remained pretty well silent. As it is often the case, the parents were more rigorous toward the girl than they were with the boy. In fact, the mother practically defended her son's actions and called her daughter a whore.

"She is a bad soul. She seduced them!" she said to her husband.

Istvan was taken to the backyard and beaten by his father. That was pretty well the end of it for him. Gizella was cast aside, and her mother would never talk to her again.

"You cannot live here anymore," declared her father two days later. "You are too big of a sinner. I am sending you to a convent. You are going to Convent Saint Margaret of Hungary. I spoke to the Reverend Mother. She said she would set you back on the right way."

Gizella lingered in this convent for more than three years. During her stay, she learned religion, art, languages, mathematic, and another form of sexual love not requiring the presence of a man. While residing at the convent, her parents or brother never visited or communicated with her.

At age seventeen, she was transferred to the Dominican Monastery for Women in Fanjeaux, France. She learned that nuns should always accomplish their respective missions within the church. She never became a nun but joined a religious group called “The Sons and Daughters of Jesus”. She was trained and formed to preach and combat heresy. Throughout the years, she learned four additional languages. Her natural abilities with physical activities combined with rigid training allowed her to obtain a black belt in martial art.

By the time she was twenty-five, Gizella was a beautiful woman. All the physical qualities she owned as a young girl had flourished and made her quite outstanding. Her mental abilities and the teachings of the church made her a powerful emissary and intermediary for the leaders of the Committee of 300. Mission after mission, she demonstrated her capacities. She could be relied upon. The faith and beliefs entrusted in her soul, mind, and heart created a devoted missionary who would adapt to all necessary means. She knew she was smart and beautiful. She recognized that her beauty was a weapon. She accepted the fact that she may have to seduce, deceit, steal, and even kill. She was an agent of the Militia of Heaven.

A few years later, after a difficult assignment became almost deadly for her, she was transferred to a convent in Ottawa, Canada. She stayed for a little more than a year. From Ottawa, Gizella moved to Montreal, the province of Quebec, where she is now living. Since she was placed in a convent in Budapest, Gizella never had contact with her family.

Two days after their previous encounter, the Most Reverend Bishop Ballard received a call. Father McLane was informing him that the special invitee had arrived in Orlando. McLane confirmed that somebody would pick her up at the airport.

Around four o’clock, the Bishop received Father McLane and Sister Gizella in his undeniably plush office.

"Most Reverend Bishop Ballard, may I introduce to you Sister Gizella," said McLane.

The Bishop stood and walked around his desk. He extended his hand toward Gizella. She bent down and kissed his ring.

"Welcome, my child!" said the bishop. "It is very nice to meet you."

"Thank you, Most Reverend. It is also my pleasure to meet you. I hope I can be of assistance."

The bishop turned toward Father McLane and offered his hand. McLane knelt on one knee and also kissed the ring.

"It's an honor to be in your presence, Most Reverend!" said McLane, hiding a humoristic smile.

"Welcome, my son!"

The bishop returned behind his desk. Back in his chair, he invited his guests to sit down.

"How was your trip, sister?" asked the bishop.

"From Montreal, my flight landed in New York. I only had to wait an hour before the flight to Orlando."

"That is good!" said the bishop. "Blessed be the Lord."

Gizella leaned back on her chair and alternatively looked at her two superiors. The dark area around her eyes showed that she was exhausted. She was dressed in a dark conservative gray jacket and long skirt. A black blouse completed her apparel. Her light auburn hair was tied behind her head. She showed almost no makeup. Her lipstick was very light. Her nails were natural. Gizella was still quite elegant and attractive. She did not look like the typical "femme fatale" but there was something truly special about her. The expression in her eyes, her inviting smile, and her composure made her stand tall in the presence of other people.

"May I ask why I am here?"

"I will let Father McLane inform you of our actual situation. You are a part of project."

"Sister Gizella," asked Father McLane. "What do you know about prophets?"

"Well, the word prophet comes from the Greek tongue and means 'foreteller.' It is normally an individual who claims to have been contacted by God or some other supernatural entity."

As she spoke, the two men could distinguish a particular accent.

"I can hear an accent when you speak," said the bishop. "What is it?"

"My first language is Hungarian, but I spent most of my life in France. I also speak Italian and Spanish with a good formation in Latin. English is a fifth language for me."

"Charming, totally charming," expressed the bishop.

Pursuing her questions, McLane continued, "What does the word 'miracle' mean to you?"

"In its true meaning, a miracle is an event attributed to divine intervention," answered Gizella. "It can also be an unlikely beneficial event."

"Quite right," agreed the bishop.

"If we have a nonreligious man calling himself the last prophet," pursued McLane. "A man who heals people. A man who can start a storm in a clear day and bring this storm to end when he wants to. What do we have?"

"A miracle-maker prophet," answered Gizella with a smile and a question mark on her face. "Do you know or have one of those?"

"May be, may be," responded the bishop.

She stared at the two men with a skeptical expression.

"We may have such a man," said McLane. "A few days ago, our man was accused by the district attorney of being insane

because he claimed to be the last prophet and the last messenger. During his hearing, our so-called prophet healed a young child and had someone testify that he could start a storm by pointing his finger.”

“Did he really heal somebody?”

“Looks like it. The grandson of the judge was slowly dying in a hospital. Somehow our prophet knew about it. During his trial, he asked to be taken to the hospital. He cured the boy. Our man was declared sane and freed the next day.”

“Do you think it was some kind of a trick?”

“We are not sure,” said the bishop. “A couple of young priests are following him. We know exactly where he is and what he does.”

“Do you think he’s a saint or a very good magician?”

“Definitely not a saint!” answered Father McLane. “Two nights ago, he visited a massage parlor. He was there well over an hour.”

“What do you want me to do?”

“Let me complete the story,” said McLane. “Less than two weeks ago, our man was found at sea. He and his sailboat had been missing for two years.”

“Very intriguing!” commented Gizella. “What do you want me to do? Why am I here?”

“Because,” answered the bishop, slowly pronouncing his words, “Father McLane wants you to seduce him and find out everything you can about him.”

“Seduce him?” said Gizella, practically insulted. “I am a Catholic sister! Not a prostitute!”

“We know,” intervened McLane. “We are familiar with all the services you rendered the church. By the word seduce, the Most Reverend did not mean to take him to bed. We want you to get close to him, to become a part of his group, to make him talk and observe what he does, says, and where he will be going.”

“I see,” replied Gizella. “How and when am I supposed to meet this fellow?”

“Tonight,” said the bishop.

“Tonight?”

“He is giving a press conference at the Convention Center. Only journalists and reporters will be allowed. We want you to assist as a journalist for the Catholic Church.”

Looking at the bishop, she said: “He wants me to seduce him, looking as tired as I am. I have been packing and went to bed late last night. I have been up since six o’clock this morning...”

McLane interrupted Gizella: “Tonight, we only want you to make contact with him. I understand certain journalists will be allowed to ask questions. Listen to the questions. Near the end, ask him something a little controversial.”

“Will he be the only person giving the conference?”

“No, he has at least two male followers. One is an attorney and the father of the young boy who was healed. The other is an out-of-luck journalist...”

“I get it,” interrupted Gizella. “I don’t seem to have any choice. I will play your game. Here is what I think I should do. I will go, dressed as a very conservative sister. I will wear a long conventional black dress. Since he has two followers, I will try to become the third. I will show much interest in what he says or does. I will find a way to personally meet him at the end of the conference and manage to become part of his group!”

“Good plan,” commented McLane.

The bishop remained silent.

“By the way,” asked Gizella, “what is the name of our prophet?”

“Bill Morrison,” answered McLane. “Most people call him Bill or Captain Bill.”

“Do you know where he is residing?” asked Gizella.

“Last night, he stayed at the Orlando Hampton Inn,” replied McLane. “According to our observers, he checked out this morning. We do not know where he will be going tonight.”

Gizella looked at the bishop, who seemed somewhat distant, and said, "I will meet him at the conference tonight. I should be able to find out where he plans to go. In case I do not, please keep your spies on him until I become one of his followers. I will let you know when your observers, as you say, will no longer be needed."

"Let me give you a few cell phone numbers. It will make it easier for you to contact either one of us or any of the two observers."

"That should work. Now, gentlemen, I think I should leave and rest a little. Could you please have someone drive me to the Hampton Inn?"

Chapter 24

Absolutely Tomorrow: The Conference

Before the conference, Bill, Carl, and Peter had a last briefing. Bill was calm, composed, and phlegmatic. Peter was somewhat perturbed, and Carl seemed to have butterflies in his stomach.

"You know, Bill," said Peter. "After the conference, you will become a target. Not only for the press but also for every person in this area with an illness or infirmity of some kind."

"It will start right after the news bulletins tonight," added Carl. "It will get worse tomorrow after all the sick and the sickos read the newspapers or listen to TV."

"Probably so," replied Bill. "That's why I checked out of the Hampton Inn. I will find a new place tonight."

"So far, so good," said Peter. "All the journalists will want to talk to you after the conference. They will follow you wherever you go."

"True," acknowledged Bill. "So I will leave before the end of the conference. I will disappear to an unknown destination."

"Where?" inquired Peter. "Where will you go? Do you want to come to my house?"

"Your house?" pointed out Carl, laughing. "Elisabeth would eat him alive. Plus, if the press can't find Bill at the end of the meeting, your house will become the port of call."

"You are probably right," replied Peter. "Where will you go, Bill?"

"I will go where the road will lead me. I'll let you both know in the morning."

"What about you, Peter?" asked Carl. "What will you do with the press mob around your house?"

"I should be able to contain the problem. Worst come to worst, I will ask my father to place a squad car in front of our property. We should be fine. What about you, Carl?"

"Let them come. It will be my moment of glory. Imagine all these all-star journalists besieging me. I will have a ball. My name and reputation will be made!"

"Good for you," reacted Bill. "In this case, here is what I suggest. After my presentation, we will take a small break. We will then proceed with the questions segment. I will not close the meeting. I will leave the podium, and Peter will replace me for about five minutes. Carl, you will speak after Peter and close the meeting. You can talk as long as you want. It will give Peter and me enough time to get away."

"Sounds good," commented Peter. "And what should I tell them to keep their interest for five minutes?"

"Totally up to you," said Bill.

"You are an attorney and soon-to-be politician after all," added Carl. "You should be able to talk for hours without saying anything."

"Very funny," reacted Peter. "And what about you? What will you tell them after I leave?"

"Do you really want to know?" asked Carl with a big smile.

"Yes, I would like to know," said Peter.

"Then, my friend, you will have to stay until the end of the meeting."

The press conference was about to start. Only ten minutes were left. Bill, Peter, and Carl had agreed to close the doors no later than ten minutes past seven. Anyone coming later would miss the conference. Carl was at the entrance greeting the journalists, the photographers, and the videographers. He was making sure everyone had his accreditation. Each person would receive a white badge. Carl was writing the name of the person on the badge and also on a registration sheet. He personally knew most of the journalists and reporters; however, he was happy to meet someone new. It would be a new contact for his career. That is why he had

requested to be the formal doorman. He asked each journalist to pick a coupon from a jar.

"Some of you will have the opportunity to ask a question," said Carl. "When it is time for you to interrogate the prophet, your number will be called."

Many visitors made inquiries. Carl limited the answer to: "You will find out everything shortly."

Five minutes past seven, the room was almost full when a good-looking lady, in a black dress, hair pulled back, and wearing glasses, came in. She seemed almost shy and very subdued.

"Is it here that the prophet is holding his conference?"

"Yes, but you must be an accredited journalist to come in."

"I am a journalist. I represent a Catholic publication. Here is my press card."

Carl looked at both sides of the card and smiled at the pretty face standing in front of him. He was not sure if he should let her in. *What was the Catholic Church doing here anyway?* He would have liked to ask Bill or Peter, but they were on the other side of the room, behind the walls. A few more persons were standing behind the sister and wanted to register. Carl could not slow down the line.

"What is your name?"

"It is on the card. I am Sister Gizella."

"You are a nun? Well, I didn't know they made you guys so pretty! Here is your card and badge. Would you like to pick a coupon? It will give you the opportunity to question the prophet."

"Yes," said Gizella. "Thank you."

Gizella reached for her coupon but picked three instead of one and slowly made her way into the room. She sat at the extreme left of the room, in the very last row. Carl received a few more pressmen, stood up, entered the room, closed and locked the doors behind

him, and walked to the podium. He had requested to be the first speaker addressing the attendance.

“Bill needs a good introduction,” he said to the other two. “I know how these gossip writers think. I will prepare them. I shall warm the audience up, as they say in show business.”

“And you are not doing this little speech just to have a chance to shine in front of your peers?” asked Peter.

“Well, maybe a little. Can’t hurt anyone.”

“It all depends on what you will say...!”

“He will do fine!” interjected Bill. “I’m sure he’s a good speaker. Don’t take too long, Carl!”

“After his opening,” said Peter, “I will proceed with your formal introduction and explain our procedures.”

“You also want your moment of glory?” asked Carl with a sarcastic smile. Peter ignored the comment.

Carl finally stood behind the podium, faced the audience, looked around the room, took a deep breath, and started, “Welcome to all. My name is Carl Spencer. Some of you know me and some do not. I am not the prophet. Just like you, I am a journalist. I am here because I had the chance to be the first one of us to meet with Mr. Morrison.

“It did not take me long to realize he is someone very special. I was there when he brought Judge Stewart’s grandson out of his coma. Since then, I have seen him accomplish other miracles. One of these unbelievable accomplishments involved me personally. Some of you may have been in court on the second day of his arraignment. You heard the young seaman who testified that Mr. Morrison launched a waterspout by pointing his finger toward the horizon, and upon demand, brought this same storm to an end. Mr. Morrison claims to be a prophet. I strongly believe him.

“It is generally very difficult to accept new revelations, new ideas, and new concepts. Most of us are familiar with the Old and New Testaments: the Genesis, the Exodus, and so on. Often we

limit our faith to what we were exposed to when we were young, be it Christianity, Judaism, Islam, or Buddhism. I am asking you to keep an open mind when you hear the words of the last prophet.”

Carl left the podium to be immediately replaced by Peter Stewart. Meanwhile, the journalists offered no applause and only looked and exchanged a few comments with each other.

“I am not the prophet either,” said Peter. “Let me start by saying that my son Francis is the little boy who was pulled out of his coma by the prophet. I was there when it happened. My father, Judge Stewart was there. Many doctors and nurses were there, and as he told you, Carl Spencer was there.”

“Now, let me tell you how we will proceed during this meeting. Mr. Morrison will address this assembly of the press. No questions will be accepted during the presentation. Once his presentation is done, and after a small break, we will accept questions. We will only accept one question per person whose coupon will be selected. Make it good! Contrary to normal procedures, you will not have to give your name or the name of the media you represent or work for. We have over fifty persons in the audience. A few will have the opportunity to ask a question. Thank you for being here, and as Carl suggested a minute ago, please keep an open mind. Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I give you Mr. William Morrison, better known as Captain Bill... the last prophet.”

Minor applause were heard in the room. Peter walked away, and Bill took his place behind the podium. As agreed, he was wearing a black pair of pants, a black shirt without a tie, and a light jacket. His hair was long and well-trimmed. A three inches beard surrounded his face. Each member of the press had a different expression when looking at Bill. Some showed an inquisitive expression. Some others presented an ironical or sarcastic face, and others, like Gizella, were expressionless. Bill looked at the people in front of him. His eyes stopped for a moment on Gizella. She noticed and smiled.

"I would prefer to be here and talk to you about my sailboat and the voyage that I planned during the course of so many years. But it is not the situation. Something happened to me. I would rather be just a man, like I used to be. Still not the case. Something incredible occurred and totally changed my life. Most of you know that about two years ago, a young lady and I left Florida on a sailboat named SeaLove. On our first night at sea, going east toward the Bahamas, we encountered two large tidal waves. We managed to survive the first breaker. We did not do so well with the second wave. We capsized. From this point on, my life as an ordinary man ended. The Coast Guard found my boat and me two years later. The boat was in a pitiful shape and still is. As far as I am concerned, I do not remember what happened to me during these two years. It's a total blank. I don't know how I survived." Bill paused.

"About two weeks ago, I woke up on SeaLove, just before the Coast Guard arrived on the scene. Before their arrival, someone or something communicated with me. I knew I was awake but thought I was dreaming. A voice told me that I was no longer just a man. The voice said I had been studying for two years to become who I became. I would be Life's last prophet, the last messenger. At that moment, I was convinced that I was defunct. I thought I was hearing the voice of God or, worse, the voice of the devil."

There was a light sound of laughter coming out of the room. Bill paused, looked at the group, and his eyes rested on Gizella one more time. He was standing tall with hands resting on each side of the podium. He spoke slowly, firmly with excellent pronunciation and intonation.

"I had to find out. So I asked, 'Am I dead? Are you God?'"

"You are not dead," the voice answered. "I cannot be called God. I am Life. The name God has been polluted, corrupted, and tarnished by generations of humans. Men have killed, tortured,

and massacred their brothers in the name of God. I cannot be known by the name of God. I am Life.”

“If I am not dead, what am I? What’s happening to me?” I asked.

“You have been chosen,” revealed the voice.” “You will carry the message. You will be the last prophet. The last messenger to be sent by Life.”

The listeners were absolutely silent. They were glued to Bill’s lips.

“Since then, Life has not spoken to me so clearly. However, Life has expressed itself through me many times. Life inspires me. I have never made any miracles. Life manifests his will through my body, my mind, and my soul. I am not and was never knowledgeable enough to tell you what I will reveal here today. Like you, I was certain that we, humans, were the greatest and the prevailing living species on this earth. We were the masters. We owned it all. We only had to fight animals or other humans to know who owned a given piece of land. It is not the case. We are only a pawn on the check board of life.”

The interest of the listeners persisted at its highest point.

“Earth is a living being. Just like you and I. Earth lives, exist, eats, grows, progresses, defecates, and ages just like we do. I noticed the expression on your faces when I said ‘defecate.’ Yes, earth defecates just like you and I. What do you think the volcanoes are for?

“The secret of life is, in fact, quite simple. We live in a universe that had no beginning and will have no ending. The universe is the totality of everything that exists—time, space, matter, energy, galaxies, intergalactic space, planets, stars, and, of course, earth with every living things in or on it, including you and me. Our universe is one among many universes in existence. We live in the Milky Way. From the earth, the poets and astronomers have divided the stars and planets into constellations. The Astronomical Union recognizes

eighty-eight constellations, covering the northern and southern sky. Believe me, there are many more. Our solar system is only a tiny part of the Milky Way galaxy. There are more than hundred billion stars." Bill took another pause.

"As I said earlier, we humans think we are the superior beings living on earth. We own it all. We share with other species as long as our greed is satisfied. Let's create a scenario. One of us buys a piece of land. Of course he has to buy from another human because only mankind owns land. Any other forms of life have nothing to say about the transaction. So our man builds himself a nice house, on this perfect piece of land, by this beautiful lake. He brings his family into his new home. Within months, the new house has other occupants—insects, rats, flies, ants, and what else. Worse of all, the structure is attacked by termites. What does he do? He will try to exterminate the vermin." Bill paused and looked around the room.

"Let's study another scenario. The world of germs and bacteria. Our respective body has quite an amazing defense system. But as we all know, a group of invaders called germs can make us sick and even kill us. There are many types of germs—bacteria, viruses, fungi, and protozoa. Let's study the bacteria. It is typically a few micrometers in length. There is a wide population of bacteria in the human body. The majority is rendered harmless by the protective effect of our immune system. Certain bacteria are even beneficial. Others are pathogenic. They cause infectious diseases like cholera, syphilis, and so on. These germs are microscopic. We can't see them yet they are terribly destructive." Bill paused another time. He looked at all the persons in front of him. Again his eyes landed on Gizella.

"By now, I presume you are wondering where I am going with this expose? I want you to understand what we are in relation to earth. We are what germs are to you. We are sickness. We are destructive. We are vermin."

"In this universe, earth is a whole entity, living among its neighbors, the stars, the planets, and the moons. It lives in a

community just like we do. What we humans do to the earth is what the germs do to us.”

Once again, Bill paused. He stared at his audience, looked at almost everyone but Gizella.

“What I want you to understand is that for earth we are germs, microbes, and pathogenic bacteria. The way you must protect your home when it is infected by termites. The way you have to defend yourself against sickness, cancer, or other disease; earth must defend itself against us. What took so long? The life cycle of stars and planets is many times longer than ours. As your life is much longer than the life of ants or termites.” Bill paused again.

“Earth has many ways to fight humans and other enemies—earthquakes, hurricanes, tornados, fire, winds, floods, waves, volcanoes. Earth has used its weapon against all living things many times. Through centuries, earth has killed and destroyed many forms of civilization. From the big dinosaurs to the smallest microbes. Thousands of years ago, earth almost killed every living thing. You have all been told about the big flood. The Bible says that it rained for forty days and forty nights. You learned that Noah built an arc. You were taught that he saved a couple of every species. It is a tale and a fantasy that crossed the centuries.”

Bill paused again and stared at his audience.

“Thousands of years ago, the North Pole became the South Pole. The continents divided. There was destruction everywhere. It was Armageddon. Many forms of living things survived. It was the wish of Life. Certain humans established on the highest mountains and the closest to the equator lived through the apocalypse. They were few living high on all new continents. They were no longer a threat to earth. Earth rested and entered what we call, the ice age.”

Bill caught his breath, paused for a few seconds, and looked at his audience. Everyone was silent; one and all staring at his face. From the back corner of the room, Gizella was bending forward, resting her chin on her joined hands. Bill continued:

“This scenario has happened more than once. Life wants us to live. Life gave us, and certain other species, the adaptability to survive. We all know of past generation of humans, those who constructed the pyramids. Most of us know about the Easter Islands. Previous generations of men were as advanced and even more high-tech than we are today. As we do, they had atomic powers, weapons, planes, and rockets. Our ancestors regularly visited other planets or stars. Compared to us, they were masterminds. Even so, the predecessors became a major nuisance to earth. They were destroyed. A few were allowed to survive and had to start from the beginning. A small number of men escaped the fury of earth.”

Bill paused again.

“It saddens me to say that our present societies have become more than a nuisance. We are a plague. We must be exterminated, annihilated.”

He paused again.

“Lately, in the past few years, we have all witnessed the changes in the weather. Think of what has recently happened in Japan. Think of all the tornados, the forests fires, the floods that are happening in the United States. It’s only a beginning. The polar vortex, the blizzards, the snowstorms, the hailstorms, the hurricanes, the dust devils, the mud slides, the electrical storms will multiply and destroy. Earthquakes that already shake our world every second will grow in magnitude. Icebergs will melt and flood the land. The water will become undrinkable. Undesirable lethal animals will invade our land. Enormous pythons will destroy our natural balance. Dangerous predatory plants will devour our vegetation and our vegetable crops. Poisonous bugs will invade our homes. Our lakes and rivers will fill

with predators. They will kill and eat our food supplies. The most poisonous fish on earth, like the silver carps, the flesh eating piranhas, the stone fishes will dominate our waters. The ozone layer will become thinner. Extreme solar flares will slam unto the earth. Forest and vegetation will burn or become contaminated. All breeds of cattle, swine, sheep, or other animals will no longer be fit to ingest. The oceans will cover the land. Earth will be washed, cleansed of all remains and vestiges of the human race. We will all be cadavers, carcasses, debris, and ashes. Mankind will be eradicated."

Bill could now see and hear the reaction of his listeners. He heard words, statements, remarks: "This guy is totally nuts!"

"I never witnessed so much bullshit!"

"Who is the judge who freed this mental case?"

The spectators suddenly became silent. Not believing what they could now see. Bill was growing in size. His features were rapidly changing. His hair and facial hair became whiter and longer. His eyes were bright as fire. He stood about 10 feet tall. He pointed his right index finger toward the audience and with a forceful and powerful voice, said, "You received my message. You are here to transmit my words of dooms to the world. You hear me and you laugh. Woe on you who will not listen. You are a perfect representation of the human race. You are arrogant, egotistical and despicable. You are the root and the cause of earth's anger. Humans are the downfall of every life form on earth. You shall suffer the most. Disasters of great intensity shall destroy you and your families. The previous generation of all species will condemn you. The next generation will have no existence."

Bill raised and fanned his arms up over his head. A bright and narrow line of fire originated from his left index finger and swiftly made its way, enclosing all sides of the room, until it reached his right index. By exception, the line of fire did not include Gizella. She, Peter,

Carl, and Bill were the only persons omitted from the ring. Gizella was intrigued and did not comprehend why she was excluded.

Bill lowered his left arm, stretched his right arm, pointed his right index finger toward the crowd, and formed a semicircle. In a powerful and treating tone, he proclaimed: "See and observe your respective family being destroyed by earth's Armageddon."

Each person included in the ring of fire fell into a trance and endured the sight of the violent, furious and uncontrollable annihilation of their loved ones. The demonstration only lasted a few seconds. However, in the mind of each ring-insider, the time was no assessable. They finally pulled out of the trance. Bill, back to his normal self, was standing firm and concluded his presentation: "Am I crazy or am I the last prophet? I can see that you need concrete evidence to make your minds. Let me make a short-term prophecy."

"Today, the weather was perfect in Central Florida. The weathermen predict the same for tomorrow. Let me change the forecast. Tomorrow, we will have rain all over Florida. Torrential rain will last for eight hours on the East Coast of the United States from Miami all the way to New York. We will have minor flooding. Tomorrow, ten tornadoes will touch down in the state of Virginia. Tomorrow, a mild earthquake will affect the area of San Francisco."

"You may believe, somewhat believe or not believe the message I delivered to you. As journalists and reporters, it is your duty to spread my words. My message must proliferate until it has reached all points on earth. Your news bulletins and press releases must open, for me, the doors of the United Nations."

"I ask you. Have the honesty not to include your own thoughts or opinions. Tell humankind what you have heard. I will only make one other presentation. Life demanded that I deliver this message to the General Assembly of the United Nation. As I stand today, they will not hear me. I count on you and on the people of earth to urge and compel the United Nations to receive me. In the name of humanity, I thank you for being here."

Bill looked at Gizella and walked away from the podium. Very few members of the press applauded, Gizella was one of them. Carl stood to the right of the podium and emotionally instructed: "We will take a short break before the prophet receives your questions. Please do not call your respective media before the end of the whole program. You are welcome to visit the refreshment table at the back. We will return in precisely fifteen minutes."

Chapter 25

Absolutely Tomorrow: Questions

The press representatives returned to their respective chairs. Peter stood behind the podium.

“Here is how we will proceed. Everyone who registered for our meeting was given a numbered coupon. I have a copy of each of the coupons in this bag. I will pull out a number. The first number out, the first question asked, and so on until we have reached the time limit for our session. I am sure you have prepared your question. Should you want to ask your own question or want to pursue a question already asked by another person, you may do so. Remember you do not have to identify yourself or the media you represent. The prophet will not accept a second question from anyone and will not in any way get involved in a debate. Carl will bring the portable microphone to whoever has the opportunity to ask a question.”

Peter placed his hand into the bag and pulled out a number. He looked around, glanced at Bill, and whispered, “Where is Carl?”

“I don’t know,” replied Bill. “He should be here.”

“The first number is 204,” said Peter. “Please stand up and ask your question.”

Bill was now standing behind the podium. Peter had stepped aside to the left of the podium. Carl was still not on stage. The first to rise was between forty-five and fifty-five years old. He was tall, had a heavy, mustache, and short hair. He looked at some of his peers, before asking: “I don’t know exactly how to refer to you. I guess I will call you Mr. Morrison.”

“That’s fine,” said Bill. “Or you may call me Bill.”

“Hold on a second,” said Peter. “I will bring the microphone to you.”

“My question has to do with religion. You talked of God, who does not want to be named God. You talked of Life who seems to play the role of God. You talked about the problems of earth. The universe that had no beginning and that will have no end. But you never said a word about religion. How do you feel about religion?”

The man looked at some of his acquaintances as if he was seeking the approval of his peers. He finally sat down.

“Religion?” said Bill. “Which one? Out of multiple religions, each one claims to be the good one; the only true one. Which is the good religion? Buddhism? Hinduism? Judaism? Islam? Most of you here would probably say Christianity. But among the Christian Churches, which one is the good one. They all claim to be the true church of God,”

Bill spoke slowly while looking in different directions and paused a second or two between each denomination of a church.

“Catholicism? Orthodoxy? Protestantism? Latter Day Saints? The Mormons? Judaism? The witnesses of Jehovah? They all profess to be the only true church. The Catholics will only have male priests. They base this theological regulation on the so-called fact that Jesus had only male apostles. The Protestants have male and female priests. Yet the Catholics and the different denominations of the Protestant Churches claim to have the same religious sources: The Bible. The Bible is somewhat different between the Catholic and the Protestant Churches. Who is right? Most religions are based on greed, power, cruelty, and passion. How many men and women were tortured, burned alive, and killed by the medieval inquisition of the Catholic Church? Thousands and thousands. All men were never equals under the Christian God.”

“Think of Henry the VIII of England. He broke away from the Catholic Church and formed the Anglican Church because Pope Clement VII would not approve the annulment of his marriage with Catherine of Aragon. Henry the VIII had six wives and beheaded two. Good start for a religion!”

“Look at what Islam is doing in our present day. How many people must suffer and die in the name of religion?”

The people in the audience were glued to Bill’s mouth.

“No my friends,” continued Bill. “Organized religion is not the will or the word of Life. Religion is man-made. It is a deceptive and political domination of men by men. Tell the masses and the crowds, the common people and the working classes what they can do or not do, and you shall control them. Create fear. Invent sins. Promise paradise, and you will create and develop a force of followers. Think of the young people carrying bombs and killing themselves and others in the name of Allah. Religions, you asked? It is often the source of all evil.”

Bill stopped and looked at Gizella. She was moving her head from right to left in a slow and constant motion. Bill turned his attention on the man who asked the question. Like most of the others, he was staring at him. Bill stepped back from the podium, and Peter took his place. Carl was still not on stage. Peter pulled another number from the bag and said, “The next number is 213.”

A young lady, in her fifties, stood up. She was small with quite a few pounds in excess. She had short grayish hair, no or very little makeup. She looked almost masculine. Peter brought the microphone to her.

“Mr. Morrison, you gave us a small symposium on the universe, the planets, and the stars. Is there, somewhere out there, another planet that can support life? Are there planets, where intelligent life flourishes?”

“There are a several planets outside our solar system that are very similar to earth,” replied Bill. There is one already known by certain astronomers on earth. They called it HD85512b. It is about thirty-five light-years away from earth in the constellation of Vela. Kepler 22b is also a planet very similar to earth. The temperature

averages around 22 degrees Fahrenheit. It is almost a twin planet of earth. It is six-hundred light-years away or if you prefer, six trillion miles away. There are quite a few more constellations that have multi forms of life, including what you called intelligent life.”

“One planet, unknown to humans, not yet discovered by our scientists is called Spina. It has about 2.5 times the mass of earth. On Spina, the temperature varies from 15 degrees to 50 degrees Celsius or if you prefer 65 to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. It has oceans and mountains, vegetable and animal life. The intelligent life is somewhat similar to ours but is more advanced. They have inter-constellation travel ability and visited earth quite a few times. Unlike us, this civilization has found a way to live in harmony with themselves, the other forms of life, and their planet.”

The journalists were rapidly taking notes. Their heads seemed to moved in unison, from looking at Bill and down at their individual notepads. Gizella was not writing. She just sat in her chair, looking at the speaker. Bill moved away from the podium. Peter approached from the left and pulled another coupon from the bag. Carl was back at his post and took charge of the microphone.

“Number 208. Who has number 20?” asked Peter.

A tall man stood up. “Your little demonstration, earlier, and the fact that you found a way to get into our brains was impressive and demonstrated a powerful form of telepathic powers. As far as I am concerned, it does not make you a prophet.”

“Was that your question?” asked Bill.

“No, sir. May I continue?”

“You may.”

“I believe in natural evolution and not in the Bible’s approach in regard to the birth of man. What is your opinion?”

“Your concept is right. The Bible’s perspective on the history of man is merely a fairytale. That so many intelligent people believe in this fable is astonishing. Think about it! Adam and Eve were the only

humans on earth. Because they sinned in the eyes of God, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden. They engendered three sons. Cain, Abel, and Seth. As we all know, Cain killed Abel and God banished him away. The only people remaining were Adam, Eve, and Seth. If Adam and Eve had three sons and lost two, how did the human race multiply and populate the world? Did Seth have a sexual relationship with his mother? The chronicle goes further by saying that the sinful people multiplied from the source of Cain. Where did Cain find a female? Did he proliferate and breed with monkeys or gorillas? If you ask the question to scholars of a Christian church, you may receive an explanation similar to this one. Adam lived for 930 years. He reasonably fathered many other children. His sons, including Cain, would have married their sisters... and so on.”

“Evolution is a four-billion-year-old process, creating life forms shaped by an ever-changing and complex environment. Life created a system that is manifested by all living things. Species through thousands of years developed into other species. There is obviously a great disagreement between church, science, and reality as to the birth of man and its evolution. I don’t want to argue with the followers of Christianity and upset the fanatics among them. Evolution is a better approach and is regarded as fact in most scientific circles. There is another factor to the evolution of man—what we call aliens. People from other planets, who came to ours and by mixing with earth’s various forms of life, slowly developed man as we know him today. I could speak on the subject for days and days, but let me conclude by saying that evolution and the assistance of aliens is the history of the human race. Different aliens, different unions, generated the different races on earth.”

Again, Bill stepped away from the podium. Peter called number 210. An older gentleman rose from his chair and said: “Like Charley, who asked the previous question, I don’t believe in all your mumbo jumbo. Anyway, at my age, death is a frequent concern. So my question is, ‘What do you know about reincarnation?’”

“What you believe or not believe is your choice. However, I am asking you to be fair. When you publish your article, tell your readers what you heard. Not what you believe.”

“Reincarnation best describes the concept where the soul and the spirit, after death, returns to live in a new body. Although most Christians do not believe that individuals reincarnate, the doctrine is supported within the majority of the Indian religious traditions. The idea was also fundamental to many Greek philosophers. Reincarnation is factual. Nothing in nature can truly be destroyed. Things can be modified and transformed but cannot be destroyed. Let me give you a childish approach to reincarnation. Let’s start with a cow, a simple cow in the field ingesting grass. Water, grass, or hay for the cow means energy. The farmer will milk the animal to bring about dairy products. It’s a transfer of energy. The cow will eventually become meat that will feed man or other species. Again it’s a transfer of energy.”

“Men or animals will eventually die. The remains will feed the soil, the grass will grow, and the herbivores will feed. The cycle of energy goes from one organism to the other. If the physical portion of a man cannot be destroyed but only transformed, why should it be different with the spirit or soul? Once a man dies, his soul gyrates into the loop or the ring and cycle of life. The soul lingers within the bloodline until a new conception in its family tree is achieved. The great grandfather or the great-great-grandfather will become the grandsons. The gender of a soul never changes. Males continue the cycle as males. Females remain females. Let me present another childish anecdote that will further explain the cycles of life. Compare your physical body to a car. It is your car. You learn to drive with influences and teachings from other people. As you drive, you develop your own style of driving. Good and bad habits. Let’s assume that you accumulate one hundred thousand miles on a car, before you get involved in an accident and destroy the vehicle. You are fine. The car is dead. You will eventually buy a new car. The odometer on the new car will read zero. You get behind the wheel. The car

represents your physical body and its odometer is your physical memory. The car does not know that you, the driver, have driving experience. You, the driver in this case, represent the spirit and soul.”

“The good driving habits and the bad driving habits you have developed as a driver of another car will be carried on to the new car. The reincarnation of your spirit is the same. Your spirit is your subconscious and your physical memory is your conscious. Your subconscious will completely control your body until your conscious is gradually able to take charge of certain factors. If in a previous life, you worked hard and became, let’s say, a virtuoso of the piano, in your new life, the aptitude will grow within you. It will be a transfer of knowledge from your subconscious to your conscious. Playing the piano will be easy for you. It will be your natural talent. The same applies to weaknesses. If during your last previous life you were an alcoholic, it will be hard for you not to become a drunk in your new life. You will have to fight in order to beat any perversion and not transfer it to new generations. The good and the bad you accumulate in your multiple lives will be engendered in all bodies of your life cycles. You may wonder why you do not recall your previous lives. Remember. Your memory only lives in your physical body. It cannot know of your previous existences. It can only be influenced by your subconscious, a reflection of your previous lives.”

A tall man with heavy glasses was next. His number was 221.

“You want to make a presentation to the United Nations. What do you want to tell them? What do you expect from them? Why not tell us tonight what you will say to them?”

“Because I do not know. Remember what I told you before about the subconscious that influences and informs the conscious? Well, I seem to have two subconscious. At times, Life takes charge and gives me guidance. It is strange and mystifying to me. I hear my voice but do not know where my words come from. I am not wise, smart enough or sufficiently informed to answer all the questions that were presented to me tonight.”

Bill looked at his hands and continued:

“I am not presently aware of the message I must deliver to the United Nations. As far as I am concerned, whatever I tell the delegates of the United Nations won’t make any difference. They have no power whatsoever. They can only report to their respective governments, which will in turn consult the true rulers. The conspiracy theory is not only a theory. It is a fact. The official leaders of most countries are not in charge of our destiny. The power comes from elsewhere. The large corporations lead humanity, not the presidents, the prime ministers, the kings, or dictators of this world. Even worst, the large corporations are under the dominance of greater powers. The utmost domination of this world is in the hands of mighty influential masters. You have heard of the Illuminati and the Templar? Yes, they still exist, and they are a constant dominant force. Other extremely powerful groups overshadowing the governments are the Masons, the Committee of 300, the Triads, and we must not underestimate the Vatican and the Zionists. These powerful entities are the true leaders of this world. They have enormous assets. They are diplomats and lobbyists. They have armies of cutthroats and assassins at their command. They control our politics, our economies, or laws and science. Under their ruling, we start wars, we fight wars, and we end wars. They set the price of energy and food. They have only two major rules—Control and profits. It is imperative that these high-powered commanders of the human race hear the message I must deliver to the United Nations. The secret societies will decide the fate of this planet. If they do not listen, submit and obey, we will have very few tomorrows.”

Bill concentrated for a moment and then kept going:

“The word Illuminaty means: ‘Those who know.’ They are Big Brother. They are the invisible governments. They are operating in the shadow. They are the true establishment. They are without scruples.”

After this explanation, Bill pulled back and took a step toward Carl. Peter came to the podium and said: "We will only accept and answer two more questions. The number is: 217."

"Only two more questions before the next break," added Carl.

Bill and Peter looked at Carl with a big question mark on their face. Carl lifted his shoulder, smiled, and said: "Trust me!"

A tall and slim woman in her forties stood up. She had a look of elegance about her and was professionally dressed.

"You talked earlier about reincarnation. You stated that male human beings would always be males and that the same phenomenon also applied to women. You further asserted that our talents and faults would follow from one life to the other. My question has two segments. Can we, from life to lives, correct our faults and improve our talents? Second, we often hear the expression—soul mate. Do all humans have a soul mate or is the word a mere invention of the poets and lyricists?"

Bill looked at the pretty lady for a few seconds and gently smiled.

"Before I became what I became, I always wondered about soul mate. I went from woman to women trying to recognize my soul mate. Sometimes I had the impression that I had found her. It was just an illusion.

"Let me give priority to your first question. The answer is—absolutely. From life to life, we should improve our qualities and defeat our faults. The more we do so, the better our following lives will be. When we live our very first life as human beings, we are part of the lower class as far as intelligence and talents are concerned. Such a person has to learn and must work to develop a competitive intelligence. The more he or she learns, the better the future lives will be.

"Now... for your second question... yes, all human beings, whatever the gender, have a soul mate. Finding the true soul mate is

not a destination. It is a journey. You see, nature has a sense of humor. It likes to complicate things. We are all created in pairs. A man and a woman are a complete unity, but they are not the same. They are meant to complete each other, not compete. We were divided at the source. One of our quests is to find our perfect half. Let me give you another childish example. Let's say you have many thousands apples and that you cut all these apples in half. You place these half apples in an immense barrel. You shake, rattle, and roll the barrel for hours. All the half apples are mixed among each other. Your challenge is to find the two right halves to complete the original apple. It would be difficult. Almost impossible. You will find half apple of the same size. The design will almost fit. The skin marks will nearly match. But it is not the original apple."

"You may find many, almost soul mates, in the course of your multiple lives. But there is only one true soul mate for you. The right soul mate is a person with whom one has feelings of deep natural affinity, similarity, intimacy, sexuality, and spirituality. Your ultimate soul mate is the only perfect half of your soul. If you find your soul mate, you have found perfect happiness. You are complete again. Once you die and come back, the game starts all over again."

"Let me add at this point that in the eyes of Life, one half of the apple is not superior to the other; but they are different. A man and a woman are equals, but they are not the same. They were never meant to be. A good man will never be a good woman. A good woman will never be a good man." In the last and present century, we are slowly destroying masculinity and femininity to produce a race of androgynous individuals. It is not good. Not good for humanity, not good for the growing children. They can't find their real identity. In a natural society, a man should be a man and a woman should be a woman. They should not be the same. They should complete each other."

Bill stepped away from the microphone one more time. Peter called the number 226. Gizella stood, lifted her right arm, and smiled. Carl brought the microphone to her.

"I paid extreme attention to your presentation, to the questions you received and to the answers you gave. It is clear in my mind that you are someone very special. As an unsophisticated nun of the Roman Catholic Church and for all intents and purposes, I can accept that Jesus, under the name of 'Life', contacted you. In the Genesis 2:7, God is referred to as Life Giver. Under John 14:6, God is referred to as Life. You may be who you say you are, but...?"

Peter moved to the podium and said, "Miss, we do not have the time to let you quote the Bible. Please, ask your question."

"Let her continue," suggested Bill.

"I am ready to pose my question. If you are a holy man, why did you do what you did two nights ago?"

"I am not a holy man. I am just a man with a message to deliver. Can you clarify your question?"

"Do you really want me to?"

"Oh yes, I have nothing to hide."

"We are not supposed to enter a debate," said Peter.

"Clarify your question," repeated Bill, totally ignoring Peter's objection. Bill was entertained by the subject.

"Very well," continued Gizella. "Two nights ago, in the area of Cape Canaveral, you entered a massage parlor and stayed there for more than one hour."

"That is accurate," said Bill.

"We know what kind of massage they give in that place. These are not the courses of action of a blessed man—the man who carries the words of God or of Life. This is my comment."

Bill looked at Gizella for a few seconds and smiled at her. Most of the people in the room were staring back and forth from Bill to Gizella. Peter seemed a little shocked. Carl was amused.

“Your question is probably one of the most interesting tonight. It will permit me to cover a subject that is almost taboo to most people. Sensuality and sexuality.”

Bill paused and looked at almost everyone in the audience.

“From centuries to centuries, from the time of our birth, we are all brainwashed when it comes to sexuality. We were told about the scandals of nudity. We were warned against the sins of the flesh. In the medieval times, the priest and the monks told us that women were dirty. Many women were executed if they shared their dishonorable body with a man. Desire and sex between a man and a woman were wrongdoing, wickedness. Unless sexuality was controlled and blessed by the religious leaders, it was an offense. It was immoral.”

Bill paused.

“This was never the intent Life.”

He paused again and added:

“Time has passed. The stupid and controlling morality of our species has not changed much. These fierce, ferocious, and vicious rules and principles fabricated by true leaders are just another way to control the masses. We all know that the Puritans had a lot to do with America’s excessive Puritanism. History reveals in many ways how the rules against sexuality were mostly directed toward the lower classes. You have heard of the famous Greek and Roman Orgies? The governing classes were practicing enjoyable sex while the people of lower social statutes feared the impiety of their sexuality. It was acceptable for the nobles to abduct and sexually assault young men or women. In our days, the high society of this world secretly practices the pleasures of the flesh in any ways that they want. Most powerful married men and women have lovers. Many share experiences with multiple partners. It is moral for them

until the lower classes are informed. The high societies control everything in your life, including your sexuality.”

Bill stood silent for a few seconds.

“Sensuality and sexuality are not a sin. They are a gift of Life.”

He paused a new time and said again:

“To kill, to ravish, to rape, to abuse another person is wrong and immoral. To morally or physically love, please, satisfy another human being is not an offense in the eyes of Life. To be cared for, caressed, massaged, or sexually satisfy another person is not sinful. The ruling and religious classes of societies want to control everything that you have and that you are. That includes your morality and your sexuality. I do not need to justify that I had a complete massage, gave and received satisfaction with a lovely adult and consenting woman. If your body is thirsty, you drink. It is good and normal. If your body is hungry, you eat. It is also good and normal. If your body and soul need affection, you seek and receive affection. It is also good and normal. We do not have eyes, not to see. We do not have the sense of touch, not to feel. We do not have ears, not to hear. We do not have the sense of smell, not to experience the aroma of a flower. We do not have the capability of taste, not to flavor the things we bring to our mouth.”

Bill looked at his audience.

“Sensuality and sexuality includes all of our senses. They are the ultimate gift at the head of the most beautiful word ‘love.’ Sex creates desire. Love feeds imagination. Sexual desire arises through the chemistry of the senses. Love is the superb invention of our soul.”

Bill raised his right hand, saluted his audience and left the room under a thunderous round of applause. Carl followed him at podium and said,

“We will take a short coffee break. Please come back to your seats in ten minutes.”

Peter escorted Bill out of the conference room. Gizella whispered into her phone: “I think he is done. Don’t lose him. I must go where he is going.”

Carl left the podium and entered the back room to be received by an aggressive Peter.

“Where the hell were you at the beginning of the questions period? You were supposed to be with us to give the microphone to the questioners?”

“Relax. I was planning Bill’s escape. Here’s what I did, Bill. Since you left your car keys on this table, I used them to take your vehicle to the Peabody garage across the street. I rented a room for you under my name. Here are the magnetic key and the ticket for the car. Your room number is 815. They won’t look for you so close to the Convention Center. Go now and rest. We will call you in the morning.”

Bill gave a thankful look to Carl while Peter was saying: “I raise my hat to you, my young friend. Brilliant idea!”

The three men shook hands. Bill rapidly walked away. Peter waited a few minutes, returned to the podium, and asked: “Ladies and gentlemen, please return to your chairs.”

Peter and Carl noticed that a few persons had left the room. Gizella was nowhere to be seen and did not return to her seat. Peter said:

“The prophet informed me that it was unnecessary for him to return to the podium. The message he delivered to you was detailed

and fully comprehensive. He has nothing else to add. Carl, one of your peers, would like to conclude.”

“My friends,” instructed Carl. “Please be fair. Transmit the prophet’s message with professional integrity. You must believe that our world, our lives, and the lives of our loved ones are at stake. We may not be able to save humanity, but let’s try. Let’s honestly try. We don’t have the time to be obstinate and recalcitrant anymore. We must work together to save our world. Let’s work together to send the prophet to the Assembly of the United Nations.”

Carl left the podium. The journalists and reporters took their leave. Peter and Carl exited the building. Two men dressed in black were watching and waiting.

Chapter 26

Absolutely Tomorrow: Bill and Gizella

The short walk from the Convention Center had been pleasant and almost refreshing. Bill was a little hungry. He decided against going to the restaurant or bars of the Peabody. Who knows, some members of the press may be going there. He took the elevator to his room, opened the door, and walked in. The first things he noticed were his two suitcases set on the floor a few feet away from the entrance.

“Carl is a great guy!” said Bill to himself.
He grabbed the phone and called room service.

“I am in room 815. I would like a club sandwich, two bottles of beer, any kind will do. Could you also add a couple bottles of water? How long will it take?”

“Fifteen minutes or so will be fine,” accepted Bill.

The room was pleasant and well furnished: king-size bed, large digital TV on top of a dark wood dresser with an enclosed refrigerator bar, a luxurious armchair, and two bedside tables with a lamp on each side of the bed.

Bill placed his smaller suitcase on the bed and pulled out his toilet bag. He undressed, picked up the toilet bag, and walked to the bathroom. A few seconds later, he was standing under a heavy jet of warm water. Once out of the shower, he placed the different articles from his toilet bag on the counter. He looked at himself in the mirror. “Shit... I am getting old!”

He covered himself with the hotel’s white robe and walked out of the bathroom.

“Dinner should be here soon,” he whispered.
He heard a gentle knock on the door.

“Good. It’s here. I am starving.”

He quickly opened the door. To his great surprise, Gizella was standing in front of him.

"The members of the press found me?" he asked.

"No, I am alone. I must talk to you," answered Gizella with a feeble smile and a subdued voice.

"I suppose the other reporters are behind you?"

"No," said Gizella, vocally stronger and with a more aggressive facial expression, "but they could catch on if you do not let me in."

Bill stepped in the corridor and looked around. There was no one else in sight. He moved back into his room.

"All right. Come in." The way he said these words, she concluded that he was not pleased at all.

"Thank you!"

Gizella entered, crossed the room, and stood by the bay window. Bill closed the door behind her.

"You are the Catholic nun I saw at the conference. What can I do for you?"

Gazing through the window, Gizella said, "The view is very nice from here. The Convention Center is quite impressive." She turned toward Bill. "The question is not what you can do for me, but what I can do for you?"

"And what can you do for me?" asked Bill, inquisitive and sounding irritated.

"Can we sit down before we start this long conversation?"

She was smiling but her tone of voice was domineering.

"I am waiting for my dinner, and I am not dressed to hold a long conversation with a pretty lady. Even if she is a nun." This was said in a somewhat cynical intonation.

"I have seen naked men before. To be more comfortable in my presence, you could always put your pants on."

"I am not naked!"

"Well, you are under that robe. Can I sit down? By the way, I am also starving. Can we share your food?"

Bill grabbed his pants and returned to the bathroom. She was still standing up, looking through the window when he returned.

"All right, sit down and tell me what you want!"

"Don't be so impatient, my dear prophet. After all, I am here to help you."

Gizella sat in the armchair. Bill took place a at the edge of the bed and looked at her. He was showing irritation but, in fact, he was entertained. The long, lonely evening may become quite interesting.

"Are you going to use your powers to make me disappear, Mr. Prophet?"

Before Bill could answer, a firmer knock was heard. Bill opened the door to an older gentleman from room service. He was pushing a cart and placed it in the middle of the room. Bill signed the receipt and added a few dollars in tip. Very few words were exchanged between Bill and the room service attendant. The waiter left the room without truly looking at Gizella.

"What are we eating?" asked Gizella, sounding like a little girl.

Bill looked at her and started laughing.

"You have your nerve. You win. I will share my dinner with you. Would you like one quarter of my club sandwich and a beer?"

"I would like half of your club sandwich and a beer."

"How did I know you were going to say that?" said Bill, rolling his eyes.

"You should know. You are the prophet after all!"

Bill helped Gizella pull her chair closer to the rolling cart. He sat at the edge of the bed and removed the cover that was protecting the meal. The club sandwich seemed appetizing and was surrounded by potato chips and pickles.

"I love pickles!" said Gizella.

"You only get half of them," said Bill with authority.

"Yes, my dear prophet."

"Unless you want me to call you my dear nun, stop calling me my dear prophet!"

"My name is Gizella!"

"I know. My name is Bill."

"I also know."

She looked in his eyes, smiled, and offered her right hand over the table.

"Bill, let's make peace, at least during dinner. Tension makes it hard for me to digest my food."

Bill pulled back a little, looked at her, smiled, moved forward, and took her hand. "You are something else!"

"And I have many more surprises for you." She was moving her head up and down while trying to control a sarcastic smile.

Bill invited her to take a portion of the sandwich while he opened and handed her a bottle of beer.

"You expect me to drink from the bottle?"

"Why not? It's my party. In Rome, you do like the Romans do!"

"You are not much of a gentleman, are you?"

"Not when someone invades my room at night!"

"You may soon become the invader."

Bill was a little shocked by the remark.

"You think I will invade you?"

"Who knows, you may."

"You can't do this kind of thing. You're a nun!"

"During your conference, you declared that it was perfectly normal for human beings to be sensual and sexual. Did you change your mind?"

"I think you are a wicked nun!"

"That's not what my previous lovers have said."

"How long have you been a nun?"

"I have never been a nun!"

This conversation was held, slowly and in good humor, while both parties were eating and drinking. After dinner, Bill became a little more serious and inquisitive.

"So if you are not a nun, what are you?"

"I am a special agent for the Society of 300," replied Gizella, also becoming serious. "Bill, would you please help me push my chair back, and if you want, we can talk about the purpose of my visit."

They both stood up. Bill moved her chair back in its place and pushed the cart toward the exit door. He sat down at the upper right side of the bed and leaned his head on the headboard. She sat in the chair and removed her shoes.

"How far will this little striptease go?" asked Bill with laughter.

"Can't go much further. This is a one-piece dress, and I have nothing under it," answered Gizella with a large grin.

"I repeat myself. I think you are wicked and totally immoral!"

Gizella ignored the statement and became serious, almost austere. "Bill, you have been watched and followed since you were released by the court."

"Interesting," said Bill now intrigued.

"In fact, two young priests watched and reported your activities to Father McLane, a Vatican Ambassador, and to Bishop Ballard of the Orlando Cathedral."

"This is how you knew what I did two nights ago?"

"Exactly. I also know that you stayed at the Hampton Inn last night."

"Why are the Society of 300 and the Vatican so interested in me?"

"You already know the answer to that question. Don't you?"

"Yes, because I am different. I claim to be a prophet. I made a few miracles. I may be who I say I am. I may become a threat to the Secret Societies of the Illuminati."

"And you could become quite controversial to the theology, the religious and social structures of our world. You may have to be eliminated!"

"Do you think that I am what I say I am?"

"You may very well be."

Gizella became pensive. Bill held a challenging expression.

"Earlier today," continued Gizella, "I reviewed and studied your healings, and this evening, I paid much attention to your words. You may very well be... who you say you are."

"How do you intend to kill me?"

"Do you think I am an assassin?"

"Perhaps! Your purse is way too small and your black dress would reveal the presence of a gun. I don't believe that you plan to execute me tonight."

"Don't be too sure. I am an expert in martial arts!" Said Gizella with a defying smile.

"Are you now? Hum... so am I. It would make an interesting fight," replied Bill, lightly sarcastic.

Gizella paused and looked at Bill. She became a little sorrowful. "I do not want to kill you, Bill. I am expected to become your

personal attaché. Father McLane transferred me here, from Montreal, to become your shadow. Since you are a womanizer, I was supposed to seduce you and melt into your life."

"Interesting! Me? A womanizer? Hum... And you want to seduce me? You would go wherever I go? Sleep in my bed?"

"Yes."

"You would tell McLane whatever I do and will do?"

"That's the idea!"

"What about the two priests?"

"They would no longer be necessary."

"When would your mission start?"

"It's already started."

"Why are you telling me all this?"

Gizella became very pensive.

"I don't know. I really don't know. I am not sure."

Bill was staring at her. He expected a more elaborate answer.

"Are you betraying your organization or are you hoping to become a Judas and double-cross me?"

"Your speech tonight. The things you said and did... somehow... I almost believe you!"

Gizella paused and slightly changed her expressions.

"Bill, I have a question for you."

"You want to know if I am truly a womanizer."

"You do not like the word? Do you? No, that's not my question. I want to know why I was not included in the light circle that you, hum... let's say, created tonight during the conference?"

"I truly don't know. I noticed that you were not included, but I don't know why."

Bill became a little hesitant. Gizella's eyes were attached to his every move.

"Gizella, I had nothing to do with the supernatural manifestation. A power, a force, took control of me and..."

"There it was?"

"There it was."

"No magic tricks? No illusions? No group hypnosis?"

"I don't know how to do magic tricks, illusions, or hypnosis!"

"It's a beautiful evening. Will we really have rain tomorrow?"

"Yes."

They both remained pensive for a short while. Gizella said: "I don't know what to think, Bill."

Bill stood up, reached for her hand, and pulled her at the foot of the bed.

"Sit here. I want you to hold my hands. Keep your eyes on mine."

Gizella became very hesitant.

"Don't be alarmed," said Bill.

She held his hands and looked at him. She entered a state of unconsciousness. Bill glimpsed at her life: her birth, her petty thefts, and her first day at school. He saw her virginity melt in the hands of her brother and his friend. He glimpsed at her forced admission to a convent. He witnessed her elaborate studies and joyful games of flesh with the nuns. He viewed her transfer to an abbey in France. He observed multiple perilous games with citizens of all society levels. He saw the lies, the deceits, the perjuries, the violence, and the killings. He saw a lonely soul, an empty heart, and he cried. He released her hands. She looked at him. Her mind had been an open book.

"You are crying!"

"I am crying."

"Why? Why are you crying?"

Bill pulled away from her, walked to the window, and looked outside. "You are right," he said. "We have a beautiful view from here."

She stood and walked toward him. She grabbed his hand. "Bill, don't walk away from me. What did you see?"

"I saw it all. I know who you are."

"Do you want me to go?"

Bill smiled. "If you go, will the priests stay?"

"Yes, probably until they find another way to observe you night and day."

"Then you might as well stay!"

"It will be safer and easier for you if I stay," said Gizella. "What did you see?"

She placed both her hands on his chest and violently pushed him toward the window. He grabbed her shoulder and pushed her back.

"Damn you, what did you see, Bill?"

"I saw you. I saw your life. I saw your emptiness."

"My life made you cry?"

"What your soul revealed to me made me cry."

"You were able to read my soul? Do you really have such power?"

"I do not. Life does and wanted me to know who you are."

"So now, you know everything about me?"

Bill hesitated. "You had a very hard life. I'm sorry!" She stepped back, quickly ran toward the door, opened it, turned around to face him, and yelled: "You had no right to invade my life. This is insane and very cruel!"

She slammed the door behind her. Bill stood in place for about thirty seconds. Someone knocked at the door. Bill opened the door. She was there, looking like a little girl again.

"I forgot my purse."

"Let me get it for you."

"Bill, don't let me go!"

She walked back into the room and pushed the door behind herself. She seemed totally exasperated. "Bill, if I go, the priests will stay. They are waiting for my call. If I make a report and let the consortium know that you are probably another prophet..."

"What will they do?"

"They will send someone else. I can't hurt you. Damn it, I almost believe you. I want to be on the right side for once."

"They will send me another pretty lady? How many do they have? I am a womanizer after all."

Bill was laughing. Gizella seemed very upset.

"You are not taking the situation very seriously. You are in danger. The religious groups, the organizations, the governments, and secret societies you denounced tonight cannot let you go on."

Bill became a little pensive. "That makes sense, but Life will protect me. I have a mission to accomplish. I did not survive two years in a small boat in the middle of an ocean in order to be killed by some wild assassin."

"Will it rain tomorrow, Bill? Are you sure?"

"Yes, it will."

"If it rains tomorrow in Florida, I will totally believe in you."

Bill ignored her last sentence and continued, "How do I know the things I know? I was never that knowledgeable. How do I make miracles?"

"Your interaction with Life is probably factual. If so, you have to be put down."

"Well, go ahead and kill me. I won't fight back."

"I can't kill you, Bill. I can't kill you because I nearly believe in you. I am almost persuaded that if you are assassinated, the world will soon and frightfully come to an end."

"Life may want you to become my third follower."

"The thought occurred to me during the conference. Especially while I was excluded from the circle of light."

"Welcome in the group!"

Bill moved toward her and gave her a big hug. They both smiled.

"Well, do you want me to go or do you want me to stay?"

"If only to get rid of these two priests, I want you to stay."

"Bill?"

"I want you to stay."

They looked at each other. She pulled the cell phone from her purse and called one of the priests. "Father, this is Sister Gizella. Everything is under control. You both can go home. Oh, by the way, my suitcase is in the back of your car. Could you leave it at the reception for me?"

She looked at Bill.

"Under what name is the room registered?"

"Carl Spencer. Room 815."

"Father, tell them that it's for Carl Spencer, room 815. Thank you. I will call the reverend bishop tomorrow."

She put down her cell phone, looked around the room, hesitated a little, and said, "We only have one bed?"

"I guess we will have to share it! Would you prefer the right or the left side?"

"The middle. This dress has been bugging me all night."

She turned her back to him, dropped the dress on the floor, and walked to the bathroom. She truly had nothing under the dress.

“You have no shame at all. Do you?”

“You have seen my life. Now you see the back side of my body.”

She entered the shower. A few seconds later, Bill turned off all lights and joined her. Their lips were united. Their flesh came together. At precisely 12:00 a.m., they were in bed, affectionately making love. Her prediction was right. Bill invaded her. They reached ecstasy.

Chapter 27

Absolutely Tomorrow: The Getaway

Bill woke up around 6:15 a.m. The curtains were not closed so the bright exterior light penetrated the room. Gizella seemed deep asleep. He got up and looked out the window. It was a beautiful morning out there. The sun was just rising over the horizon and was creating interesting light effects and shadows. He visited the bathroom. When he came out, Gizella was still sleeping. He silently opened the room door hoping to find a morning newspaper in the passageway. A copy of *USA Today* was at the entrance. He retrieved the journal and did a quick glance of the first few pages. Different photos of him were printed on the first, second, and third pages. They were surrounded by a multitude of articles revealing the different subjects of the conference. Most articles were factual and led directly to the point.

“Last night, during a small press conference at the Convention Center, the man who calls himself the last prophet predicted the end of the world. To try to save the world, he must address the General Assembly at the United Nations. He also predicted torrential rain for today. The rain would last eight hours and cover the East Coast of the United States, from Miami to New York. He also predicted ten tornadoes for Virginia and an earthquake near San Francisco. According to the weatherman, we should have perfect weather all day in Central Florida.”

“You’re already up?” said Gizella.

She sat in bed and stretched both arms over her head. Bill looked at her and said: “Good morning. You are a beautiful woman. Did you know that?”

He let the paper fall on the floor, walked toward her, and placed a little kiss on her left breast while holding the right breast

in his right hand. She laughed and pulled herself out of bed and rushed to the bathroom.

"I shall return! By the way, don't put your toy away while I'm gone. I may want to play with it when I come back!"

Bill laughed and went back to bed. He lay down on his back and pulled the first blanket up to his chest. A few minutes later, Gizella returned from the bathroom. She took a look outside and said: "No rain, Bill. Oh, I had to use your toothbrush. Hope you don't mind?"

Bill did not reply. She walked toward him, pulled off the blanket, and sat over his genitals, one leg on each side of his body.

"Considering what you did with your mouth last night, you don't mind if I used your toothbrush. Do you?"

"No, I don't mind."

Bill was smiling and looking at her. She was slowly moving her body over his. He reacted. "That's what I wanted, a growing boy. Let's put him where he belongs. Shall we?"

They faced each other and looked at each other. She was gently moving. He was caressing her legs, her breasts. They had no shame, no guilt, only desire for each other. The tempo and the rhythm were sporadic. Time had stopped. They were beautiful, loving, caring. They were sensuality and intimacy. They were man and woman devoted to the pleasure of the moment. They reached climax together. They shared the sounds of their respective eruption. They remained silent. She let the upper part of her body fall over him. They rested.

A few minutes later, while he was caressing her hair and head, Bill laughed. She pulled herself back up and asked, "And what are you laughing about?"

"I just noticed your square head. The back of your head is square! Are you British?"

"No, I am not British, but I do know my head is square at the back. I love it, makes me different. Don't you like my square head, Billy boy?"

"I love it. Want to know what else I like?"

"What else do you like?"

"Your breasts."

"What about my breasts?"

"You are forty-five years old. You are very pretty. You have a great body. You are in superb shape, but your breasts?"

"You think they're not real?"

"No, I know they are real. They are impressive. Not too big, not too small, and very perky for a woman your age. You have the breasts of a well-developed sixteen-year-old girl."

All was said under the cover of cheerfulness.

"Well, thank you, sir. I also like your special attribute."

She pulled herself away from him, got off the bed, and added while looking at him, "Even if your manhood doesn't seem so flamboyant anymore."

They were both laughing as she returned to the bathroom.

"Want anything special for breakfast?" he asked.

"Eggs. Lots of eggs."

Bill called room service and also the reception desk. He asked for someone to bring up the suitcase that was delivered for him last night. He turned the TV on. The time was 9:15 a.m. It was too late for the local news. He changed channels until he reached CSN. A couple of unknown men were discussing a crime that happened in California a few years ago.

"Bill, it's past ten o'clock, and it's not raining." She was back in the main room and looking outside. "From this point of view, the sky is totally blue."

He walked next to her right; he placed his left arm around her waist.

"From here, you cannot see the east. If you could, you would notice heavy dark clouds slowly rolling in."

"You think?"

"I know. Have faith, my little square head. It will shortly rain."

"What did they say in the paper?"

The hotel telephone rang; Bill answered. Gizella picked up the newspaper.

"Good morning, Bill. It's Peter. Did you watch the news?"

"No, I only looked at the paper."

"I read all the papers. *The Sentinel* is saying more than the others."

"What did you hear on TV?"

"Everything, Bill. You are the news of the day. Your face is all over the place."

"I think they will become even more articulate and informative when the rain starts."

"So far the weather is beautiful. Are you convinced it will rain today?"

"If you can, look at the eastern sky."

"I can't see it from my office. Are you doing anything special today?"

"No, I will just rest a little and wait for the storm. Don't go too far from home, Peter. It's going to be a wet day."

"We will all look like fools if it doesn't rain."

"Have faith, Peter, and get your umbrella ready."

"Bill, thousands of people are looking for you."

"Well, we expected that."

"I suggest you try to hide for a few days. Carl and I will control the press and the masses."

"Did you talk to Carl today?"

"No, not yet. He's probably still sleeping. What will you do today?"

"I don't exactly know. I'll let you know."

"Have a great day, Bill, and hide that face of yours. May be a good idea to shave."

"I will see. I will see."

Bill decided not to mention his encounter with Gizella. He put the telephone down. Gizella was still looking at the paper.

"Bill, I have to report to Father McLane. I don't know what to tell him."

"Tell him the truth!"

"If I tell him what I really think, they will pull me off the case and send an assassin after you and me."

She remained pensive for a while. Bill did not say anything. The room service attendant knocked at the door. Bill let him in. Breakfast was set in the middle of the room. The attendant gave a scrutinizing look to Bill. Before he could get out of the room, the bellboy came in with Gizella's suitcase. He also stared at Bill.

"Did you notice the way they looked at you?" asked Gizella.

"Yes, I did. I think we need to leave this room as soon as we can."

Bill and Gizella shared the meal without saying much. Gizella broke the silence by saying: "I will call the bishop. It will be easier to talk with him. I will tell him that I succeeded in seducing you. I will say that I'm not sure whether you are real, mad, or filled with weird hallucinations. I'm going to call him now. It should be a secret call, but to prove my good intentions toward you, I will place the call in front of you."

"I can leave the room if you prefer."

"No, please stay. I will put my phone on speaker. You will hear both sides of the conversation. Whatever I say, don't get upset."

"I won't!"

Gizella called the secret number. Bishop Ballard answered: "Sister Gizella! How are you this morning? Our young priest told me that you have everything under control?"

"Yes, I do, Most Reverend."

"Good, good. I was just talking with Father McLane; he is in my office. We are both on line. I presume no one can hear you?"

"I hope you and Father McLane can hear me!"

"Well, of course," said McLane. "We mean someone who should not hear this conversation."

"I know what the reverend bishop meant, Father. I was just being a little facetious."

"I see. I see," said the bishop.

Nothing was said for a few seconds. Ballard looked at McLane and McLane looked at Ballard. Meanwhile, Gizella was looking at Bill. He was standing by the window, looking out.

"Well, Sister Gizella," asked Father McLane. "What is your impression concerning our so-called prophet?"

"I am truly not sure, Father."

"The journalists were quite impressed. Did you listen to the news?" asked Bishop Ballard.

"Yes, I did, and as you know, I was at the conference last night."

"You must have an opinion?"

"My first impression is that he spent too much time under the sun. He may be a little coo coo."

"What about the healings?" asked the bishop. "He actually healed the grandson of Judge Stewart."

"I know. My second impression is that he has some kind of suggestive ability. He may be preparing a big scam."

"Did you share his bed?" asked Father McLane.

"That's what you wanted me to do, and that's what I did. It was not very difficult. He is impressionable and easy to arouse. You were right. He is definitely a womanizer."

Bill turned around and looked at her. She lifted her shoulder and smiled. At the same time, they all heard the sound of thunder. Gizella made the sign of victory.

"He predicted rain for today, didn't he?" asked the bishop.

"Yes, he did, and I just heard the thunder. I guess he was right. Just a coincidence, I'm sure."

"I don't know," said McLane. "It was supposed to be nice today. He also predicted tornadoes for Virginia."

"I know."

"Well... if it rains for eight hours?" added McLane.

"And if we have tornadoes in Virginia," completed Bishop Ballard. "And an earthquake near San Francisco!"

"If all these things happen. What will you want me to do?" asked Gizella.

"We don't quite know yet," answered McLane. "Stay close to him. Call us again at the end of the day."

"Very well. I will call you both later. God bless you and have a great day."

"God bless you also," added Bishop Ballard.

Gizella put the cell phone back in her purse and became very preoccupied. Bill walked toward her. "Well, that's done. Let's see what else we can do today."

"I can see the gray dark sky, Bill. It will rain!"

"I know!"

"If it rains, your other predictions will probably come true?"

"They will!"

"Then we must run and hide. I don't think they believed what I told them. Father McLane is not a fool. He will probably

figure that I sold out. We have to go, and we have to go fast. Do you have a car?"

"Yes, in the hotel's garage," replied Bill.

"Let's leave it there. They will probably send the priests back. If they see the car in its place, they may assume we are still here."

"The rain is getting heavy. It will take them awhile to get here. Let's pack and take a cab."

"They can trace a cab. That's easy."

"We will take multiple cabs to different destinations."

"It will only slow them down," added Gizella.

"That's what we need to do for now. We will think of something while we are on the road. Man, it's really raining out there."

"Your fault, why didn't you call for a snowstorm while you were at it?" She was smiling and sarcastic.

"Why didn't I think of that?"

"My suitcase is already made up. Let me pick a change of clothing, and I'll be ready to go." Said Gizella.

"I will do the same. Let's not go through the lobby when we leave. We will try to leave without checking out. That should confuse whoever may look for us."

"Good idea. But they will go after Carl. The room is under his name."

"Peter and Carl will know what to do. All they have to say is that they don't know where I am. How could they know anyway? We don't even know where we are going."

"OK. I'm ready. You must be a slowpoke. I hate waiting for a man."

"Well, my dear, I decided to shave. I will be less recognizable and will look younger."

She laughed, lifted her shoulders, and rolled her eyes. He lifted his arms in the air, gave her a smiling grimace, and said: "It won't take long."

About five minutes later, Bill showed his hairless face. "Well, what do you think?"

"You look different, but I will miss the beard."

"Why?"

"Last night it tickled me in a most erotic way."

"OK... I see..."

"Now hurry up. We have to go."

"I know you for less than a day and already you act like a wife!"

"Would you like me to help you pack?"

"No, I'm done. You didn't put any makeup on yet!"

"I wear very little makeup, Bill. I'm supposed to be a nun, after all."

"I'm ready. Let's go, Sister Gizella!"

"Lead the way, Mr. Prophet."

Once in the corridor, Bill suggested: "Let's take this passageway and stay on this floor until we reach the conference area on the other side of the hotel. We will take the elevator down and take our leave from the meeting area."

"Good idea! With that weather I hope we can find a taxi."

They did as planned and were lucky. There was a small shuttle bus waiting for convention guests and about ready to leave for the Orlando International Airport. They boarded the bus. Gizella saluted everyone as if she had known them for a long time. Bill kept his face down. They quickly became part of the group. At the airport, they got out at the American Airlines section.

"So far, so good," said Gizella.

"Let's cross the airport," said Bill "and let's go to zone B. We can catch a cab there."

"Good idea. The driver will think we just got off a plane."

Once again, they did as planned and were soon sitting in a cab. The driver was an older black gentleman.

"Where to, sir?"

"Take us to Fashion Square Mall in Orlando."

"Can do, what entry do you want?"

"The first entrance on Colonial Drive will be just fine!"

"You seem to know this town very well," whispered Gizella to Bill. "Have you ever lived here?"

"Not exactly in Orlando but close."

"This rain is very bad," said the driver.

"Yes, it is," replied Bill. "Take your time and drive carefully."

"I always do. I always do. Don't worry. I'll get you there. Your face looks a little familiar. Do I know you?"

"Many people say that. I guess I have a popular face."

Half an hour later, they were in the mall.

"The plan worked. What do we do now, Mr. Prophet?"

"I have no idea. We are following the wind. Are you hungry?"

"A little."

"There is a fairly good restaurant near the other entry. Let's go there."

On the way, Bill bought a baseball cap and a pair of sunglasses.

"That's good," said Gizella. "Your new look totally turns me on."

"You are absolutely incorrigible."

Bill pulled his two suitcases, and Gizella pulled hers until they were comfortably sitting in the bistro.

"Plan A, B, and C were achieved successfully," said Bill.

"Let's figure out plan D?"

"Well, I think..."

"Sorry!" interrupted Bill. "Look at the TV behind, just over your head."

The sound was muted, but they could easily see scenes of disasters left by tornadoes.

"Poor people," commented Gizella.

"Nobody will get hurt," said Bill. "All that will be destroyed belongs to large corporations. We may want to find a small hotel and stay right here in Orlando. They will probably track us to the airport and figure we took a flight somewhere. They won't look for us in Orlando."

"I don't think it's a good idea," replied Gizella.

"Why not?"

"They will check with the airlines. If I was trying to find you, I would not be fooled so easily."

"Makes sense. Let's find something else."

They both looked outside. It was raining cats and dogs. Water was accumulating in the parking areas. Bill and Gizella looked at the TV. The scenes of disaster were multiplying.

"I have an idea. Let's take another cab, and this time, we will go to the Sanford Airport," suggested Bill. "Do you have your passport?"

"Yes, I do. It's a Canadian passport."

"That will work! We will take the first flight to an Island of the Caribbean. It's only twelve o'clock. We should be able to catch a flight."

"In this kind of weather?"

"Well, we can try. If we can't get a flight out of Sanford, we will make another plan from there."

"Either way we will confuse them."

Once at the airport, the departure screen indicated no flights out toward the islands. Allegiance Air Line had a plane flying to Plattsburg, New York, in forty minutes.

"Have you ever been to Montreal?" asked Gizella.

"No, should I?"

"Montreal is only about hundred kilometers from Plattsburgh. It's a lovely and flamboyant city!"

"Let's go to Montreal!"

"You are so easy! You will love Montreal."

"I told you. We are following the wind."

"After we get our boarding passes, I will try to make arrangements for someone to pick us up at the Plattsburgh Airport. Will your storm go all the way to Plattsburgh?"

"I don't think so. In fact, it will be a beautiful day in Plattsburgh. Do you have friends in Montreal?"

"I live there."

"You have been everywhere. Haven't you?"

"Almost. Well, you should know. You had a talk with my soul!"

"I don't think that we should go to your place."

"You are right. It wouldn't be very wise. They know where I live. We will rent a new place or stay with my friends for a few days."

Once in Plattsburgh, Bill used a pay phone to call Peter. He informed him of the situation without revealing his present location or mentioning Gizella.

"You did good to leave," said Peter. "After the storms came true, everybody is after you. It seems that Carl is handling the PR very well. He is becoming very popular. When will I hear from you next?"

"Soon," replied Bill.

"My father said he would talk to our senator in order to create some contact at the United Nations. After your weather prophecies came true, I think everybody will believe in you."

"Great... Unless you advise me, otherwise, I will stay in hiding until I can make my presentation at the United Nations."

"Do that. Don't even tell me where you are. Watch the news to be informed on the developments of our project. Call me if you have any questions."

"I will Peter. Why don't we both buy a cheap prepaid cell phone? It may be safer to communicate."

"Good idea. I will get mine today. The next time you call me, we can exchange numbers. Otherwise, are you well? Are you alone?"

"I am never alone, Peter. Life is with me, and I will soon be in the arms of a lovely woman."

"Carl is right. You are a horny prophet."

"When you call me on my new cell phone, always erase my number after our talk."

"I will do that. This way, if someone else handles the phone, they will not easily know whom I called."

"I will do the same. So long, Peter. Thanks for your help. I will talk to you soon. Say hello to Carl for me. How is your son?"

"Getting better every day. By the way, the man in charge of repairing your boat called. I told them to proceed as fast as possible. I sent him a check for fifty thousand dollars."

"That's great, Peter. Thank you. I will call you in a few days."

After the call, Bill caught up with Gizella.

"While you were talking with Peter," said Gizella, "I found my friends."

Two ladies in their forties were standing next to Gizella who proceeded with the introductions.

"This is Francis!"

"Hello, Francis, I am Bill."

"Nice to meet you, Bill."

"And this is Pauline," continued Gizella.

"Hello, Pauline."

"Hello, Bill."

The formalities were short. The group escaped the airport and walked toward the parking lot. Bill was walking behind, side by side with Gizella. Francis and Pauline were walking ahead and pulling one

of Bill's suitcases. Bill was looking at the girls' behinds. Both girls were quite rightly shaped.

"I see what you are looking at," whispered Gizella. "Don't become too interested. They are both lesbians."

"Hum... how sad!"

As they were laughing, Francis looked back.

"What are you two laughing about?" asked Pauline.

"Bill was admiring your buttocks."

"Oh I see! What is so funny about that?" asked Pauline.

"I told him I was also admiring your behinds."

Pauline and Francis were quite pleasant to look at. Overall they appeared charming. Both stood about five feet five inches. Francis carried a few more pounds than Pauline and in all the right places. Francis had long brown hair, reaching the middle of her back. Pauline's hair was short and black.

Gizella slowed down and forced Bill to do the same. She let the distance increase between the two couples.

"I did not tell them who you are or what is special about you."

"That's sensible."

"I told them you are a retired army doctor who wants to sail around the world. I added that your sailboat is in need of maintenance. You and I met at a conference in Florida. You are a great lover, and we decided to spend some time together."

"I like the good lover part!"

"I lied. I had to tell them something."

They were soon in a small black SUV. Pauline was driving. They crossed the Canadian Border without problem. On the way to Montreal, they stopped for dinner in a little town called La Prairie. Under the influence of Gizella, Bill experienced his first

Quebecois Smoked Meat sandwich. The meal was appetizing and very tasty.

“So where will we stay in Montreal?” asked Bill.

“Tonight you will both stay with us,” answered Francis.

“They live in an exciting area of Montreal called le Plateau Mont Royal. It’s an older district which is now quite chic and up,” added Gizella. “Many artists and people artistically inclined just love the Plateau and live there. The houses may look a little old from the outside but most have been rebuilt and have plushy interiors.”

“And we have lots of boutiques and great restaurants. Great night life,” added Pauline.

“Can’t wait to get there!” said Bill.

“How did you like the smoked meat?” asked Francis.

“I loved it. Totally delicious. Reminds me a little of a Pastrami sandwich. But it is much better.”

“Well,” said Pauline, “if you like good food, Montreal will be heaven for you.”

Chapter 28

Absolutely Tomorrow: Montreal

Entering Montreal from the south side of the Saint Lawrence River is quite an impressive sight. Crossing the river on Champlain Bridge gives the driver and passengers the chance to see the multiple high-rise buildings of the city. Immediately north of downtown, the Mount Royal Mountain stands proudly overlooking the busy life of the booming metropolis.

"This looks like a grand city," said Bill. "How old is it?"

"Montreal was founded by Le Sieur de Maisonneuve in 1642," answered Pauline.

"It's about 375 years old," added Gizella.

"It is the second largest French City in the world, right after Paris," commented Francis.

"Awesome!" said Bill. "Where do you girls live in relation to downtown?"

"A few miles from downtown. The Plateau Mont Royal is north of our actual position and just east of the Mont Royal Mountain," answered Pauline.

Twenty minutes later, around ten o'clock, they arrived on the Plateau Mont Royal. At first sight, Bill was not overly impressed, but as they drove east on Mont Royal Boulevard, he changed his mind. Both sides of the cheerfully lighted road were crowded. The restaurants, the bars, and the sidewalk cafes were actively serving customers. The whole scene represented the "joie de vivre" the French population is known for.

"Great!" said Bill. "Is the whole city that lively?"

"Pretty well," answered Francis. "Montreal is a city of culture, science, and entertainment. It counts many districts. The Plateau is one of them."

"Among the different districts," we have the Latin Quarters, the Italian sections, the English districts, and Chinatown. One of the most interesting is "Le Vieux Montreal," added Pauline.

"It means the Old Montreal," informed Gizella.

"I figured that one out," answered Bill. "I learned a little French in the past. I even spent a few weeks in Paris."

"Good for you," concluded Gizella.

"You guys must be tired," said Pauline. "If not, I am. I suggest we go home now. You can explore Montreal tomorrow."

"I agree!" answered Gizella.

"I'm ready for a French Fiesta," declared Bill. "But you girls are right. We shall fiesta tomorrow!"

Pauline turned left on rue Saint Andre. She drove about a quarter of a mile north and parked the car on the narrow street. She pointed toward a gray-stoned house.

"Voilà, our home," she said.

Whether made of red bricks or gray stones, the houses all looked similar. They were somewhat narrow with two or three stories. Gizella, Pauline, and Bill pulled the suitcases out of the car. Francis walked ahead and unlocked the front door.

"Welcome home," she said gallantly.

"Thank you," replied Bill. "I am happy to be here. You ladies are very sweet."

The interior was striking: bright colors, expensive dark woods, and magnificent large oil paintings. A grand piano, a wide chandelier, and wall lamps were a significant part of the decor. The reception or salon of the house was more than breathtaking. The place was impressively furnished.

"*Magnifique!*" said Bill. "You have great taste."

"Thank you, Bill," replied Pauline.

"It is nice of you to say so," added Francis.

"Wait until you see the rest of the house!" continued Gizella. "Where do we sleep?"

"Your usual room, Gizella, on the third floor," answered Pauline.

"Great. I like that room!"

"Will Bill share the room with you or does he need his own room?" asked Francis with a quaint smile.

"I don't know," answered Gizella. "What do you want, Bill? Are you man enough to spend another night in my arms?"

"Is that a challenge?" answered Bill, laughing.

"Gizella, you are bad!" commented Pauline.

"Real outrageous," added Francis.

They all laughed together. Pauline, with Francis in tow, led them to their bedroom. Gizella was right. All the way to the third floor, the decor was exceptional. The bedroom was unique. Louis XIV furniture, old French tableaux, low-level lights, and heavy dark red curtains. All walls in the room were covered with red fabric. Multiple paintings were hanging in calculated areas. The ceiling was white and encased with old designs; the floor was covered with a plush red and black carpet. The bed was queen-size with a high dark wooden headboard. A small dark wooden table, surrounded by two wooden chairs, a wooden dresser, and a linen chest completed the furniture.

"*Magnifique* again!" said Bill.

"The bathroom is across the hallway, Bill," said Pauline. "Gizella will show you."

"We will let you guys freshen up," suggested Francis. "Should you want to come down later and have a drink with us, you will be welcome."

"Unless you are too tired," added Pauline.

"We will be happy to come down and have a drink with you," answered Bill. "I think you both deserve a kiss and a hug."

He walked toward them, grabbed a girl in each arm, and placed a soft kiss on each of their foreheads. Francis and Pauline looked at Gizella.

"That's great," commented Gizella. "I like to see my friends break the ice."

Francis and Pauline left the room. Before they were halfway down the first set of stairs, Gizella called, "Oh, Pauline, I have something to ask you."

Gizella caught up with the girls. Bill wondered what Gizella was up to. He moved closer to the bedroom door. He heard the three girls laugh together. One of them said: "If you want, that could be fun." And Gizella returned to the room.

"What was that about?" asked Bill seemingly curious.

"Just girl talk. You will find out soon."

"How can these girls afford this place? Are they born rich or something?"

"No, I don't think either of them comes from money."

"How long have you known them?"

"Oh, about three years."

Gizella faced Bill with a cute little interrogative grin on her face. "Am I being cross-examined about my friends?"

"No not at all," answered Bill while placing a little kiss on her forehead. "However, I must admit I am a little intrigued by your friends."

She took a step back, still looking at him. "I agree, they are a little peculiar and the decor of their house is unconventional but...!"

"But?"

"It's quite appropriate with their profession."

"What's their occupation?"

"It's really more like a vocation. Anyway, with your prophet powers, you should be able to know anything you want about them without asking me."

Gizella turned her back to him, grabbed her suitcase, and undid the zipper.

"True but I am only inspired when it's totally essential. I don't think that my personal and human nosiness are of great interest for Life."

Bill also proceeded to open his suitcases. Gizella turned and looked at him. "I am somewhat confused about you, Bill."

"What do you mean?"

"You prophesize great disasters and the end of humanity, yet..."

"Yet?"

"You are so, let's say, casual about the way you lead your life."

Bill walked toward her. "We must all die, Gizella. Today, tomorrow, or another tomorrow, I will no longer be here."

"When you die, what epitaph would you like to have?"

"It should say, I hope the nasty little worms find my flesh delicious."

"That is nauseating!"

"Meanwhile, I want to live every day of my life with a smile on my face. I want to capture every moment left. I crave new experiences."

"I understand. I pretty well feel the same way. You are hell of a guy, Mr. Prophet."

Bill grabbed her, placed his arm around her, gave her a big kiss, and said: "And you are an extraordinary woman, my dear nun."

They kissed again. She pushed herself off and said: "Anyway, you will soon be familiar with everything you want to know about the girls."

Gizella started undressing. "I suggest you also undress and wrap this large towel around your waist."

She laughed quietly while observing his probing expression. "I can tell you compadre that you are in for the time of your life."

"Hum," replied Bill, "I think the light is getting brighter."

"You are probably on the right track but the surprise will be greater than you may expect."

"And you call their profession a vocation?"

"Why not? The vocation of pleasing others while filling their own bank account."

They both disrobed and wrapped a large white towel around their waists.

"You are not covering your breasts?" asked Bill, a little tickled.

"Why should I?" Gizella lifted her shoulders and gave Bill the left-eye wink. "You have seen my boobs and they have boobs..."

"And they've already seen you naked!"

"Absolutely! Follow the nun, my dear prophet, and don't ask so many questions. We are in for a great relaxing time."

She grabbed Bill's right hand and gently pulled him toward the stairway.

"So my new lover took me to a house of ill repute?"

"You are almost right, but they have a great reputation with their clients!"

"They are prostitutes?"

"Not exactly, they give body treatments, body wash, massages, and stimulating sexual encounters to couples only."

"You said they were lesbians."

"They are!"

Gizella stopped her progression down the stairs, placed her right hand on the ramp, and turned toward Bill who was a step or two behind her.

"You see, Pauline and Francis always work together. They receive a couple or two and give each partner, in the presence of the other, a treatment that is to die for."

"I see!"

"Good, just follow me, and you shall enjoy."

"Lead the way!"

They walked down all the way to the first floor. From there, Gizella led Bill to a hidden door across the living room, to find the entry; she had to pull a book cabinet of about seven shelves containing many heavy books and cleverly attached to a door. The opening uncovered another set of stairs. A little red light on the side of each steps showed the way to a room that was almost completely dark. The decoration was hard to pick out. The room was somewhat lighted by a few red lights ingeniously hidden. They were obviously in the basement of the house. Soft French music completed the ambiance. Always following his guide, Bill crossed the chamber and was led to another entry. From the inside, Pauline or Francis opened the door. It was truly dark.

"Welcome to our scrub room. Please give me your towel."

"Well... OK... If you want!"

The voice led Bill to believe that Pauline was taking his towel. He noticed the string of red lights on the floor. His eyes were slowly getting adapted to the low light level. He noticed that Pauline was effectively his hostess. He also discerned Francis receiving Gizella's towel. Bill was guided to one of the tables set in the middle of the room and was asked to lay face down. Gizella did the same on the other table.

"Enjoy, my friend," said Gizella while grabbing his right hand for a second.

Bill observed that Pauline and Francis were also totally naked. They both reached for a hose attached to the ceiling. Francis directed a jet of warm water on Gizella. Bill received the same treatment from Pauline. After the water rinse, the hostesses covered the back of their guests with perfumed soap.

"Hum... ," said Bill, "that smells good."

Pauline used her hands to rub, wash, and caress Bill's body. No places were neglected. Pauline had alternatively a firm, soft, and delicate touch. Bill was sure that Gizella was receiving the same therapy from Francis. Fifteen minutes later, Pauline used the spray hose to rinse off the soap from Bill's back. She bent down toward Bill and asked him to turn over. He was aware of her breasts touching his back. He turned around almost at the same time that Gizella did.

"What do you think, Bill?" inquires Gizella.

"Sensational!"

Francis left the side of Gizella and moved close to Bill. Pauline slowly took her place next to Gizella. Bill and Gizella both received warm water spray and a coat of soap on the front side of their body. This time again, Bill was washed and caressed from head to toe. Since he was on his back, he could keep his eyes on the therapist. He was almost flabbergasted by the size of Francis's breasts. She was carrying big melons, well in place and moving gently in rhythm with her caressing motions. Francis also had strong hands and was giving his legs and thighs a deep massage. She gradually went up his body and Bill reacted. She looked at him and smiled. She moved her palms up his body to eventually stand behind his head. She massaged and caressed his face and washed his hair. She rinsed down his body and wiped most of the water off with her hand. She inclined herself toward him and caressed him with her long hair and with her breasts. Gizella probably received a similar session.

"OK you two," said Pauline, "stand up so we can dry you."

"Already?" complained Gizella. "I could take a lot more of this treatment."

They both stood up. Francis and Pauline used the large white towels to dry the recipients of their good care.

"OK, lovers, follow us," said Pauline.

"Who will be first for the next treatment?" asked Francis.

"There's another treatment?" asked Bill.

"Sure is," answered Gizella. "I want to be first."

"Very well," said Francis, "you will be first."

They returned in the previous section of the basement. Bill's eyes were now adjusted to the faint red lights. He could make out what was in the room. He noticed a massage table set on a gray marble floor, which was extending about 3 feet away from each side of the table. The rest of the floor was wood set in a basket weave pattern. On the farther side of the table, he identified a few mattresses laid down side by side. They were covered with silk sheets, pillows, and cushions of different bright colors. The music was soft and romantic.

"You know the drill, Gizella," said Pauline, softly and pleasantly. "Get on the table and lay face down."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Gizella. "Oh... I love this part of the treatment."

"What should I do?" asked Bill.

"You will help us," answered Francis. "Our friend on the table is about to receive a six hands massage."

"And you are next, Bill," added Gizella.

Pauline touched a control and reduced the light intensity. In the meantime, Francis covered the backside of Gizella with warm scented oil.

"Take care of her feet and legs, Bill," said Pauline. "I will massage the upper part of her body, and Francis will take care of the middle."

"Will do!"

Gizella was in heaven. Once the back side of her body was done, she was asked to turn over. The three therapists continued with the treatment until their healing and caressing hands made

contact with the breasts and genitals. Gizella rejoiced of pleasure under the gratifying touches.

"You are done, Gizella. Bill's turn," said Francis.

Pauline and Bill helped Gizella off the table. Francis poured champagne in a super-size sparkling wine cup. They all drank.

"Gizella likes to call our cup a chalice," commented Francis.

"Doesn't it look like a chalice, Bill?" asked Gizella.

"It sure does. May I drink a little more before I fall under the power of your six hands?"

Bill had another sip of champagne and lay face down on the table.

"I will take care of the feet and legs," said Pauline. *"Francis will take the upper body, and you, Gizella, you have the rest."*

"Fine with me," said Gizella. *"I like growing boys."*

"We know," said Francis. *"That's why we gave him to you."*

Bill was amused by the comments. Not unlike Gizella, he was gratified by the six hands dancing on his body. When it was time to turn around, the girls stared at his penis and looked at each other.

"This man is very healthy," said Francis.

"That he is!" answered Gizella.

The massages continued. Near the end, four hands were caressing and teasing Bill's genitals. Pauline looked and kept her hands high on the thighs.

"OK, Mr. Bill. You are done. More champagne?" asked Pauline.

They all shared the godly elixir. Pauline guided Gizella and Bill on the mattresses. Francis turned the lights completely off. What happened during the sexual confrontation, Bill could not perfectly remember. Who kissed him so intensively? Who mounted him so deeply? Who slapped his buttock? Whose orgasm did he drink? Who

did he complete the session with? An hour or so later, Pauline whispered: "Wow, that was something."

"Let's shower and go to bed," added Francis. "I am exhausted."

"Good idea," added Gizella.

"You girls are already done?" commented Bill.

They all laughed. Pauline turned the lights on at very low intensity. She led the way back to the shower room. Francis adjusted the water temperature. They washed each other with renewed pleasure. Bill reacted.

"Look at this one!" yelled Francis. "He's ready to go for another round."

"Let me take him to bed. I will make him pay for his insolence," added Gizella. Then she said in his ears: "The bishop was right about you. You are a horny prophet."

They all laughed again and exited the shower room. Pauline gave Gizella and Bill a new towel and said: "Good night, lovebirds. Have fun. I am going to sleep like a baby tonight."

"So will I," added Francis.

A few minutes later, Bill and Gizella were back in their room. Within moments, they were in bed. Gizella touched Bill's toy. It was at rest.

"Oh I see. You were just showing off for the girls."

They laughed together, and after a few kisses and caresses, they were in the arms of Morpheus. The time was 2:17 a.m.

Around four o'clock in the morning, Gizella woke up. She was not sure but thought she had heard the sound of the doorbell. She tried to focus but did not hear anything else. She looked at Bill. He was sleeping like a baby. She went back to sleep. A few minutes later, another unusual noise woke her up again. Half asleep, she concentrated. It sounded as if someone was having a fight. She

recognized the bang of a handgun equipped with a silencer. Now totally awake, she sat in the bed and kept listening for new clues.

“What the hell is going on down there?” she said to herself.

She looked at Bill. He was still asleep. She gently got off the bed, walked to the chair, and put on her robe. She gradually opened the bedroom door and looked at the stairs. She did not see anything but could hear someone walking carefully with extra precaution. She had a bad feeling.

“The soldiers are here! How did they find us so fast?” she whispered.

She closed the door behind her and looked at Bill one more time.

“How can he sleep so deep with this racket?”

She tiptoed around the bed until she reached the dresser. Her purse was on top. She opened the bag and pulled out a small black metal container. She carefully opened the cover and removed a medical syringe. She drew out the blue tip and put it back in the container. She purged the air from the syringe until a few drops of liquid came out. She walked around the bed until she reached Bill’s side of the bed. He was half covered and sleeping on the right side of his body, therefore exposing his left hindquarter.

“You are making things very easy, my dear prophet!”

A quick and firm movement inserted the needle in Bill’s buttock. She quickly injected a heavy dose of Propofol into his body. Bill jumped and rapidly turned face up, almost breaking the needle that was still in his body.

“What’s going on?” he shouted. “What are you doing?”

“I’m sorry, Bill. I had to do what I just did. Sleep well, my friend.”

She pulled out the syringe. Bill was trying to lift his head. He fell back and returned to sleep. Gizella rapidly replaced the syringe into

her purse, backtracked to the bedroom door, opened it, and looked down. Whoever was coming up was almost at the last step of the second set of stairs. He or they were moving very slowly and noiselessly, probably looking in every room on their way up. They were making sure not to leave anybody behind them.

"The guys are real pros" thought Gizella.

She looked at Bill. He was deep asleep. She walked down a few steps and yelled a code of reconnaissance: *"Matris officium."*

Whoever was coming up the stairs stopped moving and answered: *"Patris officium."*

She had guessed right. The squad coming up the stairs was part of her organization. She walked down one more step and shouted: *"Copiae Trois!"*

"Copiae quatre et cinq," answered one the visitors.

She felt a little better. She outranked the two commandos coming up the stairs.

"How many persons are in the house?" asked one of the men.

"A total of four, including me," answered Gizella. *"Two downstairs and two up here."*

"We took care of the two downstairs," added the voice.

"I took care of the one you are looking for. Are the ones downstairs still alive?"

"They are both dead."

"The Supreme wants your guy alive for questioning," said the other voice with a strong Italian accent.

Gizella controlled her tears and the sound of her voice as well as she could.

"You did not have to kill the girls. They were harmless."

"We can't leave any loose ends."

During the conversation the men reached Gizella's bedroom. One was tall and slim. His partner was a little shorter. They were dressed in black, wore a black face mask and a black baseball cap. The room was only lit by the light coming through the window. Gizella pointed toward Bill and said: "He's there. His clothes are on the chair. Dress him up while I get dressed."

"The shorter man with the Italian accent replied, "I would rather dress you up!"

She turned toward him and slapped him.

"Do as you're told. I don't have time for pigs! By the way, I do not want to know either one of you. Once this mission is completed, you and I never met."

The shorter man gave her a dirty look and did not answer. The taller man said: "That's good."

Gizella dressed hastily and placed all of her things in her suitcase. She picked up and packed Bill's things in his two suitcases. Once it was done, she ordered: "Tie his hands behind his back. Should he wake up, I don't want him to be able to point at anything. The man has strange powers. He could become dangerous. You guys take the suitcases down. I will stay with him and remove any signs of our presence."

"Agreed," said the taller man.

"What kind of car are you driving?" asked Gizella.

"Black Van," answered the smaller man.

"That's good."

They did as planned. As soon as the men left the room with the suitcases, Gizella bent down on Bill. He was breathing normally. She then rushed downstairs to check on the girls. Her deadly associates were right. The wounds were fatal. Gizella could not hold her tears.

"Pauline, Francis... I'm so sorry. What have I done?"

She did not want the fanatic killers to see her cry. She wiped her eyes, rushed upstairs, and rapidly cleaned the room as much as she could. Back on the lower floor, she met with the taller man.

"The suitcases are in the car," he said. "My partner is waiting for us. I'll get the man."

"I will help you."

"I don't need any help. I can handle him."

"Be careful with him. After he's in the van, come back inside," ordered Gizella. "When the police get here, I want them to think this is the scene of a robbery."

Bill was taken down to the car. The tall man returned to the house.

"Let's break and steal a few things," he said.

"My prints are all over this place," Gizella answered. "I will go downstairs and start a small fire."

Once it was done, they both rapidly exited the property, leaving the broken door half open behind them.

"Where are we going?" asked Gizella from the backseat."

"Oka," answered the tall man, from the front passenger seat.

"To the cloister?"

"Yes."

"Stop in about five minutes away from here," said Gizella. "I want to call the fire station from a pay phone."

"Do you think it's a good idea?" asked the shorter man while driving.

"We can't take the risk to have to whole neighborhood burn down."

"Makes sense," replied the tall man.

A few minutes later, Gizella called 911. She talked in low-class French through a thick cloth with a high-pitch tone voice.

"Me and my boyfriend broke in, you see, and he shot the women because they saw us. He also started a fire."

They arrived in Oka, a small town in the province of Quebec, around 6:30 a.m.

"We have orders to undress him and lock him up in one of the underground caves," said the tall man.

"Why?" asked Gizella. "Should we not meet with the abbot first?"

"We have orders," repeated the shorter man.

"I can't accept that. You guys do what you want. I'm going to talk to the abbot," said Gizella.

"You'll have to deal with the head prior."

"He is here?"

"Sure is."

Once inside the ancient dwelling, she climbed the stairs and registered with the monk at the reception. The men entered the building through a lower door leading to a tunnel. A few minutes later, Bill was left in solitary, in a 6 foot by 6 foot concrete cell without window. The air was musky, cold, and damp. The smell was atrocious. They undressed him and replaced the handcuffs, leaving him with both hands tied at the back. Still unconscious, Bill was left on the rough cement floor.

Gizella was received by the head prior at precisely seven o'clock. They met in a small office furnished with an old, ugly desk and three chairs. On the wall was a large crucifix. The prior was a man in his fifties, totally bald, pale skin, with big gray and round inquisitive eyes. From his general obese appearance, Gizella concluded he was a sick man. What impressed and almost scared her were the prior's eyes—cold, steel eyes, indicating high intelligence but also cruelty.

"You asked to see the abbot. I am replacing him. You work with our Society, don't you?"

"Yes, Prior," Gizella was intimidated.

"What can I do for you?"

"Your soldiers and I brought in the man that calls himself the last prophet."

"I know, my child,"

"I don't think, continued Gizella, it's good to place him in a dungeon and humiliate him the way your men are doing."

The prior kept his eyes on hers. His expression never changed. He was still like a statue. She was nervous and worried.

"Sister Gizella, it is not for you to decide what is good or bad or to question the Holy Society."

"I understand but..."

"To understand is advisable. To obey is preferable. To disobey is lethal."

"Is my obedience in question?" Gizella was getting highly apprehensive.

"I do not like the way you accomplished your mission."

"I captured and brought the prophet to the Holy Society!"

"Did you?"

"Well yes! He is here, is he not?"

"You were not supposed to bring him to Montreal."

"I had no choice," Gizella was getting tense.

"You never advised any of your leaders of your actions."

"I was planning to report this morning."

"We had to find you and bring an end to your love affair."

"How did you find me?" asked Gizella, showing curiosity.

She rapidly regretted the question. The prior almost smiled and moved his head up and down before pointing his left index toward her.

"The society have unlimited wisdom, my dear sister. We keep an eye on all our collaborators, if only to protect them in case of danger."

Gizella decided to change the direction of the conversation. She sat straighter in her uncomfortable chair and asked, "May I say something in my defense?"

"You may."

"I did not have a love affair with the man. I seduced him as requested by Father McLane. Mr. Morrison is a very smart person, and he truly believes that he is the last prophet. During his press conference in Orlando, he demonstrated to me and many members of the press that he has infinite knowledge and some very special capabilities.

"Continue."

"I managed to enter his circle and gain his trust. He already has two disciples. My goal was to become the third."

"Continue."

"Yes, I shared his bed. My feelings were and still are that I can get more information from him with pillow talk than you will in humiliating him and taking him to the torture chamber.

"Be careful. You are getting very aggressive, sister."

"I am sorry. I do not mean to be. But I have a point to make. The man is a decent person. He should not be treated like a criminal."

The Prior stood and showed anger. "The man is more dangerous than a criminal. He may or may not be a prophet, but he is absolutely a rebel rouser."

"Do you know what he has done in Orlando? He predicted storms and the storms became a reality. The good people of Florida believe in him. They are looking for him. They want to be healed by him."

"That's why I convinced him to leave Florida," said Gizella, gently moving her head.

"It may have been a good plan, but you should have advised the Holy Society and received authorization."

"I could not. He was always next to me. I did not have his full trust."

The Prior sat down and looked at her with a dead expression. She was calmer. She knew the worst was behind her.

"My child, I will give you the benefit of the doubt. However, this case is no longer in your hands. You may leave my office."

"Where do you want me to go?"

"It's a big world, sister. Go where you please. We will contact you whenever we need you."

Gizella left the office. The prior never noticed the lonely tear falling from her left eye. She walked down the stairs and immediately saw her suitcase by the door. On the way, she met the abbot. She was sure it was not coincidental.

"Good morning, sister. I know you wanted to meet me but... My hands are tied when it comes to the affairs of the Holy Society. I trust you had a good meeting with the head prior?"

"Yes, thank you, Father."

"Here, I have a little something for you."

He handed her a large brown envelope.

"What is it, Father?"

"You will find out when you open the envelope. Have a great day. Sister Gizella."

He walked away, and Gizella left the building. Once outside, she opened the envelope. It contained ten thousand dollars in one hundred dollar bills.

Chapter 29

Absolutely Tomorrow: Gizella's Quest

Once outside the cloister, Gizella became aware of her despair. She was tired, exhausted, discouraged. What should she do now? Where should she go? The security prior made it evident. The Society doubted her loyalty. She may become a target. Why did the abbot give her money? Normally when she needed funds, all she had to do was to visit any major bank and present her select money card. She also carried the most popular credit cards. She never had to justify her spending and never had to make a payment. The Society took care of her expenses...

Something else was very unusual. The security prior did not give her any directives. He did not send her on a mission, did not tell her where she should go to await orders. She was free as a bird. There had to be a cage around her. She must be under surveillance. That's it! She will be followed. Somebody must be watching her at this very moment.

Gizella gradually increased her speed toward the boulevard stretching in front of the walls and portal of the cloister. She felt like turning around to look and see if someone was watching her. The security prior was probably standing at his dirty little window observing her. Well, she won't give him the satisfaction. She will not turn around. She will proudly walk out of this place.

Once she reached the boulevard, Gizella looked both ways hoping to find a taxi. There were none in sight. She turned left and proceeded toward the next intersection. She walked about half a mile before reaching a little family restaurant. She was hungry and thirsty. She decided to make it clear to her observers that she was acting normally. She was received by a pretty young waitress.

"Bonjour, madame. Vous désirez un petit déjeuner?"

Gizella spoke perfect French but decided to answer in English.

"Yes, please. I would like a good breakfast."

"Very well, madame. Will this table be fine for you?"

"It will be fine. I do not need to look at the menu. I would like orange juice, coffee, two eggs sunny side up and toast."

"Very well, madame."

"Oh, tell me? Is there a taxi stand close to here?"

"Not that I know, but we can call a taxi for you."

"Wonderful. Ask them to be here in about twenty minutes, won't you?"

Once in the taxi, Gizella asked: "Tell me. Do you know a place where I could rent a car?"

"Yes, just a couple of miles away. There are a few rental companies near the airport."

"Please take me there."

Gizella rented a small car. She asked and received the option to return the car anywhere she was going, as long as the company had an agency in that city. She had no precise destination but was convinced she would be followed. Gizella smiled. She felt better. Her natural sense on competition took over.

"Well, people, get ready. I'm going to take you on a wild-goose chase," she whispered to herself.

She headed west out of Oka and stayed within the speed limit. She gave as much attention to her rearview mirror as she did the front windshield. She changed directions and roads a few times, turned right and left. She stopped at a gas station and checked the air in the front left tire. She did not observe anything suspicious. The cars and trucks on the road were moving normally. Back in her car, she turned around in the direction that she had come from—no cars were stopped on the road, no vehicles turned around to follow her. She stopped again by the side of the road and scrutinized the skies.

She saw dark and light clouds. If she was hoping to see a little plane or helicopter. She was out of luck.

"I guess nobody is following me. I may be paranoid!"

She decided to go to Ottawa and visit a long-time friend. He was much older and no longer active with the Society. She arrived in Ottawa around two o'clock and returned the car. She took a taxi and showed up at her friend's house just before four o'clock. A young man answered the door.

"Does Dennis Lemay still live here?" Gizella asked.

"Yes, he does."

"May I see him?"

"Can I tell him who wants to see him?"

"I am an old friend of his. My name is Gizella."

"One moment, please."

The young man left the door half opened and walked back into the house. He returned a few moments later.

"He will see you. Follow me."

"Thank you."

"Miss, I hate to tell you that my uncle is not feeling very well. In fact, he may be dying. Please don't stay too long and try not to trouble him."

"I did not know. I'm very sorry. Maybe I should go?"

"No, he wants to see you. Please follow me."

The house was stern and so was the decor. When she first saw Dennis, in his bed, she recognized the face of death. He looked at her and tried a smile. It was a grimace. She neared the bed, sat at the edge, and grabbed his left hand.

"Well, my friend," said Gizella, smiling. "I guess you won't give me a lesson in martial arts today."

Dennis whispered more than he talked: "If you are here, it's because you need help."

"No, Dennis, I..."

"Let me talk. We both know I am right. What is going on, Gizella?"

Gizella told him Bill's story and her participation. He listened without interrupting. Gizella ended her saga with a question.

"I need to know how they found me so rapidly in Montreal. I'm sure the girls did not betray me. They wouldn't know who and where to call anyway?"

Dennis lightly moved the hand he still had in hers. His eyes showed a little more of the past intensity.

"Did you have your teeth checked lately?"

"No, not for a while."

"When was the last time they sent you to a dentist?"

"I'm not sure. Maybe two or three years ago."

Dennis took a deep breath. He seemed to be going back to sleep. Gizella became a little anxious. She moved his arm and said: "Don't sleep now Dennis. Tell me."

Dennis reopened his eyes. "You probably have a microchip in one or two of your teeth. Go see a dentist. Get them removed."

"Oh my god! Then, they know I am here?"

"Yes, don't worry. They can't do much to me, I'm almost dead."

"But your nephew?"

"He knows what to do. I told him everything and taught him all that I know."

Dennis tried to take another deep breath. Gizella looked in the mirror on her right and noticed that she was a mess.

"Another thing, Dennis. Today when I left the cloister, the abbot gave me ten thousand dollars in cash. That never happened before."

"Hum," said Dennis, pensive. "They probably cancelled your select money card and all your credit cards. They did not want you to be totally broke."

"You think?"

"The money may be counterfeit."

"They want me arrested and thrown in jail?"

"Maybe not. You know too much. Let's see. I bet they had every single bill marked."

"What would be the purpose?"

"It would be another way to follow your steps. I will have Pierre check the money. Gizella, leave this demonic Mafia Society or this Holy Society as they call themselves these days. Run and hide. They are poison. We are not Sons and Daughters of Jesus. We are trained assassins. They call themselves 'The Militia of Heaven.' They used us for their greedy and dreadful benefits. The Templars, the Masons, the Zionists—they are all linked together. They impose their will upon any government. They rule the world through incompetent and chosen leaders of the world."

Dennis paused and tried to get another deep breath. Gizella was looking at him. She was shedding tears. More than she ever did in her life.

"It's good to cry now, my sweet Gizella. Cry now, but be strong when you leave me. I am so sorry that I helped them make a courtesan and a mercenary out of you."

"What should I do? What about your nephew?"

"I told you. My nephew knows what to do. As far as you are concerned, get away from the greedy bastards and find piece if you can."

"What about Bill?"

"The man who calls himself the last prophet?"

"Yes."

"Do you care for him?"

"I think so. He's very special."

"You hardly know him."

"I know but... He must think I betrayed him."

"If he is truly the last prophet, he will know the truth. He will get himself free."

"He is locked in a dungeon in Oka."

"If he can create storms, he can make a building crash."

"His hands are handcuffed behind his back. He needs his hands to activate the elements!"

"If God exists, if this prophet was created by God, a pair of handcuffs cannot be unmanageable! Now, I want you to go. Your mission is to find and free your friend Bill."

"I will do all that I can."

Dennis pressed a little button that was near his right hand. His nephew entered the room.

"Pierre," said Dennis "this is Gizella; she is a very good friend."

Gizella stood up and shook Pierre's hand. The young man was not more than twenty years old. She appreciated his firm grip and noticed his strong athletic body. He seemed very bright.

"Pierre," continued Dennis, "there are three things I want you to do for me and her. First, Gizella must see the dentist to remove a or many microchips from her mouth. You know where they should meet. Please call him and make the arrangements."

"Yes, sir."

"They gave her ten thousand dollars in cash. Please check the money. If it is counterfeit or marked, keep the money and give her ten thousand of ours."

Dennis was talking low and slowly, taking a breath of air between each sentence. Pierre looked at Gizella and said: "I can do that."

"Third," continued Dennis, "find a name in our file. Make her a new passport, new driver's license, and from our emergency funds, make a new credit card under her new name."

"How much credit should I give her, Uncle?"

"Twenty-five thousand."

"Who will make the payments?"

"She will. Won't you, Gisella? With your new identity, you can build yourself a good credit and start over."

"I will, Dennis, but don't I need an address for the credit card?"

"What address should I give her, Uncle?"

"Hum... how about Rue Du Palaie in Hull. Nobody is using this little apartment."

"It's a good idea, Uncle," answered Pierre. "Tell me, Ms. Gizella, do you have your passport and driver's license with you?"

"I do."

"What about the money."

"It's in the suitcase I left at the door. I will get it."

"One minute," said Dennis. "While you were at the cloister, did you always have your suitcase in sight?"

"No, it was not with me while I was in the head prior's office."

"What about your purse?"

"It was always with me."

"Pierre," continued Dennis, "please make a full search of the suitcase. Open it carefully. There may be some explosives in there."

"You think?" said Gizella.

"Who knows?"

Gizella took the documents out of her purse and handed them to Pierre. They both left the room. Gizella took the money bag out of her suitcase and gave it to Pierre. She then returned to the room.

Dennis was resting. Gizella decided not to disturb him. She looked out the window. Pierre came back into the room about thirty minutes later and said: "Uncle was right. The money is good, but it is marked. There were no explosives or chips in the suitcase."

"Your uncle is a wise man, Pierre. I will miss him terribly. He was more than a father to me."

"He is also more than a father to me," responded Pierre. "Ms. Gizella, you will see the dentist tonight. I will have someone take you there. By the time the doc is done with you, your new documents will be ready."

"What will my new name be?"

"You will have a Canadian social security card, a Canadian passport, a Quebec driver's license and a Visa card, all in the name of Gisele Simon. Do you like your new identity?"

"Yes, the first name is very close. That is good."

"Do you speak French?"

"Yes, I do."

Dennis woke up and asked: "How did you get here, Gizella? Do you have a car?"

"I took a taxi."

"Pierre, you will have someone take our friend to the doc?"

"Yes, Uncle. I have already made the arrangements. Pierre left the room."

Dennis was breathing with difficulties.

"Gizella, thank you for visiting a dying old friend. When you think of me, remember the good days. We were great lovers? We're we not?"

"The best. The very best." She leaned toward the moribund and placed a soft kiss on his lips.

"Thank you, Gizella. This is a good way to go. Leave me now and try to find redemption and happiness."

Two hours later, a tall, skinny dentist removed a tiny microchip from her molar number fifteen and another chip from molar thirty.

"These microchips are simply extraordinary," he said with admiration. "Anybody who has the code can find you. No matter where you hide in the world."

"Are they still good?"

"Oh yeah!"

"What will you do with them?"

"You get the chips back. Keep them with you."

"So I could carry the chips when I want the snoopers to know where I am and leave them behind when..."

"You got it. Now remember. You and I never met."

"Well, I don't know who you are. I don't even know where I am."

"Somebody will drive you downtown Ottawa. After this, you are on your own. I have an envelope for you. Good-bye, Miss."

"Good-bye, Doctor."

"Oh, I am not a doctor, but I did refill the two small holes that I made in your teeth. I suggest you see a real dentist one of these days."

From downtown Ottawa, Gizella took a cab to the airport. She was tired but back in control of herself. Gizella had a plan, worthy of her talent. She would show them what she was made of. She took a room at the Ottawa Airport Inn. She had a good meal and went to bed a little past twelve. Before falling asleep, she cried a little and could not remove Bill's image from her mind.

"Poor, Bill, I wonder what they are doing to you?"

She fell asleep after two o'clock and woke up around seven in the morning. She took the time to take care of herself and was happy with the results.

"Good, I am almost me again."

During a light breakfast, she read the morning paper. She found a short mention about the fire on Plateau Mont Royal. It was rapidly controlled by the firemen. The bodies of two women were taken to the morgue. Gizella put the paper down, placed her head on her hands, and shed a few tears.

"The bastard will pay. Even if it's the last thing I ever do."

She took a cab and asked to be taken to the international part of the airport. She walked around, studying the departure times and the people waiting for a plane. She finally found the passenger she was looking for.

"Oh, what a nice doggie. Can I caress it?"

"Sure," said the old heavysset woman. She talked with a strong German accent.

Gizella sat near the woman, caressed the little dog, and asked: "Are you going back home?"

"Yes," said the old lady. "I'm going to Germany."

"Do you have a direct flight?"

"No, we will stop in Amsterdam. We will have a one-hour layover. Tinie and I should be in Berlin around eight tonight."

"Tinie, what a fitting name! She is so pretty."

Tinie was all happy and reacted to Gizella's caresses by turning on her back and exposing her belly. Gizella looked at the small brown cage that was set on the floor to the left side of the woman.

"How does she like to travel in the cage?"

"She hates it. After a long trip, she turns her back on me. Even if I call her, she won't come to me. But what can I do?"

"Do you leave food and water in the cage?"

"Ya... She has water in the bottle, and I put dry food in the bowl."

"Does she eat?"

"She eats everything."

"That's good. You are such a pretty doggie, yes... very pretty."

"Is the cage big enough for her? Can I look at it?"

"Ya... sure, if you want."

Gizella bent down and looked inside the cage. She dropped the two little microchips in the food bowl. She returned to her seat and continued her conversation with the lady. The dog was of course the main subject. Twenty-five minutes later, the passengers going to Amsterdam were called to the gate. Gizella left the German woman. Before leaving the airport, she visited the Bank of Montreal and tried to get some money from one of her credit cards. She was told that the credit card was no longer active.

"Bunch of bastards. Dennis was right about you."

She took another cab and asked to be taken downtown Ottawa. She used her new identity to rent a car for two weeks. It was agreed that she could return it in any town, where the rental company had an office.

Chapter 30

Absolutely Tomorrow: Bill's Wrath

Bill woke up. He was cold, shaking, trembling, and hurting. He hardly had the strength to sit.

"Where am I? I can't see anything. Why is it so dark?"

A throbbing headache dominated his thoughts. His body was aching, mostly on the left side, where he was in contact with the ground. He tried to use his hands to scratch and recognized the ground he was on.

"Why are my hands tied behind my back?"

He concentrated and attempted to control his mind. He had to take charge. He had to reason to remember.

"What happened? How did I get here?"

He remained on the cold, hard, rocky cement ground, shaking, quivering. He kept his eyes closed. The darkness intensified the distress gradually growing in him.

"How did I get here? Where am I?"

If only he could remember and rationalize the cause for his present situation; he tried to focus to remember. There was no light in his mind just as there was no light around him. His left side was hurting. Something sharp was piercing his flesh.

"I have to sit. I must get off the ground."

He moved, curved, and twisted his body until he was finally sitting. The action reduced the sharp pain in his side but produced new soreness on his behind. He left his chin fall on his chest to undergo deep concentration. He remembered his contact with Life... his mission... Gizella.

“Gizella!” he said loud enough to hear himself.

He could eventually think. He recalled some of the recent events of his life. He kept searching. He remembered the night in Montreal with the girls and Gizella.

“Whatever happened after that night, how did I get in this stinking place? What is this place? Did Gizella and the girls double-cross me?”

As time passed, Bill’s mind was getting clearer. He was still bewildered and confused.

“I must try to get up. I must determine where I am.”

With great difficulty, he managed to get on his knees and eventually on his feet. He was weak and rapidly became off-balance. He started to lose consciousness and fell sideways. His fall was interrupted by a cold rough wall. He leaned on the wall and worked at regaining his mental concentration. He stayed in that position for a period of time that seemed like years to him. He managed to control his thoughts and to regain some physical discipline. The headache was gradually going away, the dizziness was fading. Bill was finding himself.

“I was drugged. The damn bitches drugged me! I’m probably still in their house. In a locker somewhere.”

He tried to straighten up. His head touched the ceiling.

“Hum, from the floor to the ceiling, there are less than 6 feet!”

He made a couple of short steps back and hit what he figured was the back wall of his cell. He followed the back wall. Four short steps led him to another wall. He did the same thing with this wall. Four more steps and he reached another wall. He walked four more

short steps along that wall and reached the wall he was originally resting on.

“Damn... They got me locked in a 6 feet by 6 feet cave with a very low ceiling. Why?”

After this little exercise, he was almost out of breath. His heart was beating at an excessive speed. He leaned against one side of his cage. He was totally naked, he was cold, he was trembling, yet he was covered with sweat.

“It stinks in this rat hole.”

He rested a minute and concentrated again. He had to take charge of himself. He turned his back toward one of the walls and redid the walk around his cell. He used his fingers to examine the surface of the enclosure.

“There has to be a door.”

He finally found a vertical crack. Less than 2 feet away, he discovered another one. He lifted his hands up and down both cracks trying to find some kind of handle or bar holding the door shut. He was also searching for hinges.

“OK... I located the door but did not find any handle or hinges. So... the door opens toward the outside.”

Talking to himself and listening to himself helped him protect his sanity.

“Let’s review the situation—I am in a cell 6 feet by 6 feet wide. The distance from the ceiling to the floor is also approximately 6 feet. It smells like shit, and the air is totally polluted. I am naked, cold, and can’t see anything.”

He continued his exploration by analyzing the floor with the tips of his toes. The floor was made of roughly covered stones, concrete or cement. He could also feel some soft and sticky substance.

“I’m standing on dead rats or human excrement!”

This discovery was nauseating. He moved his feet back from the sticky and stinky stuff and rested his left shoulder against one of the walls. He realized he also had to obey nature’s call.

“This is horrible. I guess a man’s gotta do what a man’s gotta do!”

He continued the inspection of the floor. In one of the corners, he discovered a hole, about two inches in diameter.

“This must be a drain. This area will be my toilet.”

After the completion of the necessary undertaking, Bill promptly moved away from the stinking corner. He heard a squeaky sound coming from his left side. The door was slowly opening. The bright light blinded him. He waited a few seconds before slowly tiptoeing toward the entrance. He prudently tried to look out until the door was wide open. He could distinguish a human silhouette standing a few feet away. Bill carefully progressed to the door and cautiously waddled through the opening. He found himself in a large concrete chamber. His eyes were adapting to the illumination provided by a single bulb on the ceiling. He distinguished the presence of four men. Looking at them attentively, he noticed that they were all dressed in a full-length brown robe with a strand of wooden beads around their waists and a cross at the ends of the beads. A massive hood enveloped their heads. Their feet were in brown sandals.

Bill’s delight to be out of the cell and his natural sarcastic sense of humor exploded: “What are you, guys? Medieval monks? Am I dreaming or is it Halloween today?”

They ignored his remarks. One of them pointed toward another room situated on his right.

Oh, you want me to go in that room? What’s there?”

The four men disregarded Bill's question and stood still with their hands inside their wide sleeves.

"Oh I see," said Bill. "Not only are you medieval monks, you are silent monks. Works for me. I will do all the talking."

He entered the new enclosure. The walls were about 10 feet apart. A wide open drain was set in the center of the floor. One of the monks pushed him toward the middle of the room. Bill noticed the hose resting in the corner.

"Hey, don't be so brutal. I'm not quite solid on my feet yet."

One of the monks grabbed a hose and turned on the water. The hose nozzle was oversized and the spray unusually intense.

"You people have good water pressure around here. Are you trying to drown me?"

From very cold, the water turned to very hot and back to cold. The overwhelming spray lasted for about five minutes. The monk turned off the water. Two of them approached Bill each holding a large beige towel. They dried Bill from head to toe.

"Is that what you guys like to do? Playing with boys?"

Again the monks ignored his comments.

"Do you at least understand English?"

The two other monks placed a white cotton cloth around Bill. He was covered from the base of the neck to the feet. They attached the fabric on his back, leaving the tied hands inside the cloth.

"At least you are not dressing me in your shitty brown color!" said Bill with arrogance.

One of the monks came close to him and slapped him with violence. Bill had to take a few steps back.

"Well, you do understand English after all."

Bill spat in the monk's face. He was punched in the lower stomach; he bent down and coughed. The other monks pulled their colleague away from Bill.

"You bloody coward," yelled Bill. "It's easy to hit a man when he can't fight back. Isn't it?"

Two of the monks grabbed Bill by each arm and pulled him out of the shower room. One of the other monks led the way while the violent one followed at the back. Bill decided to remain silent. The blow he received left him in pain. He had trouble breathing. They climbed up two sets of stairs to finally arrive in a wide corridor. Bill was directed into a long, narrow room. At one end, there was a table covered with a black cloth. Two columns about 8 feet apart from each other stood in the middle of the room. A metal ring was fastened on the center of each column. A chain was attached to each metal ring. Bill was pushed between the columns. His cloth was lowered below his shoulders and tightened around his waist. One of the monks put a metal bracelet on each of Bill's wrists, attached the chain to the bracelets, and removed the handcuffs. Two other monks picked up the slack in the chain and pulled Bill's arm up. The violent monk kept his distances and looked at Bill with a sadistic smile.

Bill did not say anything and looked around him. The walls were dirty gray. There was no decoration whatsoever except for a large crucifix hanging high on the wall behind the table Bill was facing. The four monks silently left the room. Bill was left alone.

About an hour later, a short and somewhat fat, bald man entered the room. He wore a black tunic without a hood. A cord surrounded his waist. A large wooden cross was attached to the end of the rope. Without even glancing at Bill, he sat behind the table and looked at his notes. Bill decided to play the game and paid no attention whatsoever to the monk.

"So you are Mr. Morrison?" asked the head prior.

"You know who I am. Why ask me?"

"And you claim to be in touch with God?"

"Not your God."

"And God made you the last prophet?"

"Life made me the last prophet."

"God, the Creator or Life. What is the difference?"

"People like you dirtied the word God. The Creator doesn't want to be known as God."

"Do not insult God. I am the servant of God."

"No wonder Life does not want to be known as God."

"Be respectful, Mr. Morrison. I am a priest."

"You are as false a priest as a silicone breast is fake."

"I am warning you, Mr. Morrison. Change your attitude or I will send you back in the dungeon. I am trying to have a coherent conversation with you. You are trying my patience."

"Your threat is no worse than the threat of a skunk. You stink, but you cannot intimidate me."

The exchange of words between the two antagonists was swift and bitter. They stared at each other for a few moments.

"Your insolence troubles me," said the head prior. "I will have to send you back to the dungeon. We can talk again in a couple of days."

"My tolerance is coming to an end, monk."

The prior observed Bill, smiled, and said: "By the way, Mr. Morrison, how did you like our Gizella?"

"You are not fit to say her name, monk."

"She betrayed you! Don't you know that?"

"To serve you under fear is not an act of betrayal against me. You cannot hurt me, monk—mentally or physically."

The head prior stood, walked around the table, and stood about 5 feet in front of Bill.

"Well, that's it, Mr. Morrison. I will call my men, and they will take you home."

“You mean your desperados?”

“Again, you are insulting a servant of God.”

“You are a fool, monk. You came too close to me.”

Bill’s eyes lit like fire. A beam of intense rays linked the eyes of the prior to Bill’s.

“You are now under my control through the power of Life. You will do as I command.”

The prior tried to escape Bill’s domination. He made a few steps back and froze in place.

“Do you understand me, monk?”

“Yes,” answered the prior, very softly.

“You will take your normal attitude of arrogance. You will call your bandits and tell them to set me free, to get my suitcases and all my things, and to bring them here. You will inform them that I am free to go wherever I, please.”

Without a word, the prior walked to the door and said to the four monks standing on the other side of the corridor: “Brother Peter and Brother James, go and get all the personal things that belong to Mr. Morrison.”

“Everything?”

“Everything. Brother Daniel and Brother Paul, please come in here and set Mr. Morrison free.”

The two monks looked at each other and at their leader. They could not believe what they were hearing.

“Yes, you heard me right. Set Mr. Morrison free and be gentle with him.”

In no time at all, Bill was free. He approached the monk called Brother Paul by the head prior and violently hit him in the lower abdomen.

“Now we are even monk.”

Brother Peter and Brother James came back to the room and were astonished by what they saw. Brother Paul was on his knees with his head down on the floor. Bill was free and laughing. They were told by the head prior to leave Bill’s things in the room, to take Brother Paul with them, and to wait in the corridor. Brother Daniel left the room with them.

Bill told the head prior to stay in place and not to move. The prior obeyed. Bill rapidly checked his things. All was in place including his money, passport, credit card, and other important papers. He got dressed as rapidly as he could and placed his two suitcases close to the entrance.

“Monk! You will now tell your bandits to retire to the chapel and to pray for me. Tell them not to leave the chapel until they receive direct orders from you.”

The head prior executed the order. Bill waited a few minutes and said: “Now, monk, you will lead me to the extra luxurious room, where you kept me for a while.”

Again, the prior obeyed without any questions. They rapidly walked down the stairs. Bill recognized the dungeon. He ordered the head prior to enter the room and locked the door behind him. He took the key and placed it in his pocket. He went back up the stairs and grabbed his things. He easily found the entry to the cloister. A young monk was at the reception.

“Do you have the right to talk?”

“Yes, sir,”

“Who is in charge of this place?”

“The abbot is Father Marchand.”

“May I see him for a moment? It is important.”

“Let me call him.”

The young Monk talked with someone for a moment and described Bill.

"He will see you, sir. Please follow me."

Bill entered a fairly nice office with photographs of the saints and of the pope on the walls. Of course, a large crucifix was in a dominant place. The abbot stood up and greeted Bill at the door. He was dressed in a black tunic without any ornaments. The two men shook hands.

"What can I do for you my, son?"

"Father, I noticed that most of the monks in your monastery are not covered with the medieval robes."

Father Marchand seemed ill at ease.

"It is true."

"I had to deal with some of the monks wearing heavy brown robes and hoods. They are not very nice people. Are they part of your congregation?"

"No, my son. They are not, and I will admit that they scare me a little too. They only come here once in a while. We do not have anything in common."

"So why do they have free access to your abbey?"

"I occasionally receive orders to accommodate them. They do their things, and we do ours. They only stay for a few days."

"They are dangerous people father!"

"They have their own way of serving God, my son."

"You may as well recognize that they serve their own interests, Father. Can you tell me what town or city I am in?"

"You are in Oka," answered the abbot, a little surprised by the question. "Don't you know where you are?"

"I do not. You see I was brought here by force and, of course, without my consent. So what is Oka?"

"A charming little town about forty-five miles northwest of Montreal."

"Thank you. Anyway, Father, I wanted to let you know that the one they call the head prior is locked in your dungeon."

“Dungeon? We do not have a dungeon.”

“Well, Father, if you follow the long corridor to the back of your building, you will find two long stairways. At the bottom, you will find a large concrete room. On the far walls, there are some heavy doors. Behind these doors, you will find the dungeons.”

“These are not dungeons,” said the abbot, laughing. “They are the cold rooms, where our predecessors used to keep the food before the invention of refrigeration.”

“I see... Well, I was locked in one of these rooms for a while. It did not smell like food, Father.”

“How were you ever locked in one of these rooms?”

“Ask the head prior. By the way, he is also experiencing a little stay in one of your food rooms. I suggest you let him out in a couple of hours. Here is the key.”

“The head prior is locked in one of the cold rooms?”

“Yes, Father. I think he wanted to pray in peace. His men are doing the same. They are waiting for him in the chapel.”

The abbot exploded with laughter.

“Thank you. It was nice of you to let me know. I think we will let him pray and accidentally find him in a couple of hours.”

“Good idea, Father.”

“I am sure you had nothing to do with his predicament but...”

“But?”

“It may be safer for you if you left before we free him.”

“I think so, Father. Can you have someone call me a taxi?”

“It will be our pleasure. Don’t tell anyone, but you made my day.”

The abbot was still laughing when he opened the door to Bill’s freedom.

“Oh, Father. Have you seen a pretty young lady around here recently?”

"Yes, two days ago. In fact, I was asked by the head prior to remit a brown envelop to her."

"Did she seem OK?"

"She was a little sad after her meeting with the head prior. Is she someone you know, Mr. Morrison?"

"Yes, very well. So she was sad?"

"Yes, she had tears in her eyes."

"That is good."

"It is good that she was not happy?"

"In this case, yes, Father. Very good."

Bill took a few steps away from the door, turned around, and looked at the abbot with a sarcastic smile.

"Father, since the head prior made the lady cry, don't you think he should spend a few more hours in the cold room?"

"I am an old man. Mr. Morrison. It may take me a while before I can go down the many steps leading to the lower part of our old cloister."

"You are great, Father. I like you."

Bill turned around and followed the sidewalk leading to the boulevard he could see in front of him. The time was a few minutes after two o'clock in the afternoon.

Chapter 31

Absolutely Tomorrow: Bill and Gizella

Bill reached Quebec Route 344. The cab driver was standing near his vehicle and smoking a cigarette. The driver welcomed Bill with a smile and opened the front passenger door for him. The driver placed Bill's two suitcases in the trunk of the car.

"Où voulez-vous aller monsieur?"

"I know what you asked me, but my French is not very good. Do you speak English?"

"A little, monsieur. Where do you want to go?"

"I really don't know. First of all, take me to a good restaurant. I am starving."

"What kind of food would you like?"

"A big juicy steak would be just perfect."

"OK, sir, I will take you to the Oka Steak House."

They were only a mile away from the point of departure when a small black car passed them and gradually slowed down in front of the cab.

"What the hell is this?" said the cabbie. "Some people are really bad drivers."

"You can say that again."

The taxi driver tried to go around the black car by moving to the left side of the road. He was blocked again and forced to slow down even more.

"Câlis de merde! Il est fou!"

"I think a woman is driving the car," said Bill.

"Of course, monsieur. A man would have to be crazy to drive like that!"

The black car kept slowing down until it was almost stopped. A hand came out of the driver's side window and waved.

"Obviously the woman wants to talk to us. Maybe we should stop!" said Bill.

"As you want, monsieur."

The cabbie parked the car on the side of the road. The driver of the black car got out and walked toward the taxi. Bill recognized Gizella. He got out the car and walked to meet her. They exchanged a long look and hugged. Bill returned to the cab and said, "I guess my girlfriend is not mad at me anymore. Will ten dollars cover your time?"

"Yes, sir. Let me help you with your baggage."

"Merci..."

"I don't blame you for leaving me for her. She is a pretty one!"

Bill smiled, looked at the driver, then at Gizella, and said: "Gizella! My cab driver said you are pretty!"

Gizella walked to the cabbie, kissed him on the cheek, and reply: "Merci!"

Once in Gizella's car, they both remained silent for a while. Bill waited for her to open the conversation.

"Are you upset with me?" asked Gizella.

"Should I be?"

"No, Bill. I did what I could to protect us both."

"Gizella, please stop the car for a moment."

"OK!"

She drove the car into a little parking lot by a pharmacy.

"Give me both your hands and look at me."

"Are you going to read my soul again?"

Bill did not answer. He held both her hands and kept his eyes onto hers for about five minutes.

“You did what you had to do. I understand even if I don’t completely agree.”

“I did not want them to kill you or me, Bill. As long as they believed, I was on their side. I was able to keep some control of the situation. It worked. Did it not?”

“It worked! Now, if you want to be totally forgiven, take me to the Oka Steak House. My cabbie told me it was a great restaurant. I have not eaten in quite a while. I am starving!”

“I am not familiar with the restaurant. I don’t know where it is.”

“Then let’s find out.”

Bill got out of the car and walked toward a young couple just coming out of the pharmacy. He talked with the young man for a second and made a gesture toward Gizella.

“They don’t speak English! I can’t understand what they say.”

Gizella approached the young couple and rapidly learned the location of the restaurant. Ten minutes later, Bill was facing almost half a cow in his plate. The steak was medium rare and absolutely tasty. Gizella had a bowl of beef soup.

“What should we do now, Bill?”

“I am not sure. I suggest we find a quiet place, stop, and talk...”

“Hum, I know where to go. It’s a lovely park by the lake of the Two Mountains right here in Oka. It’s a working day. There should not be too many people in the park. We can lie on the grass, and after a long, sexy kiss, we can talk. Will that work for you?”

“Sounds good to me!”

“I will insist on the kiss!” Gizella smiled.

A little after four-thirty in the evening, they were sitting side by side on the grass. The sun was getting low. The reflection on the lake created golden radiances that were simply magnificent to look at. A multitude of maple trees stood proudly trying to reach the firmaments. The trees were home to birds and squirrels. The chants of the birds, the murmur of the fresh afternoon breeze, and the laughter of a few kids playing at a distance led the two adventurous companions into each other's arms. Gizella was leaning against the side of a giant tree. Bill was on the right side.

"Bill, do you know what is very special about these trees?"

"Aside from the fact that they are grand and beautiful?"

"Hum... Hum..."

"Tell me?"

"Did you ever taste maple syrup?"

"I think so."

"Maple syrup comes from these trees. In the spring time, the farmer collects the sap from the trees, boils the sap, and produces maple syrup."

"Hum, you don't say. I guess it's a demonstration of life constant star over."

They remained silent for a few more minutes. There was still a barrier between them.

"Tell me what is bothering you, Bill?"

He answered with a phlegmatic smile.

"The night the gangsters came into your friend's house, did you know they were coming?"

"How did you know about the soldiers, or the gangsters, as you called them?" She asked.

"Earlier, when I held your hands, I read the whole story in your mind."

"How convenient!" Gizella was a little shocked. "So, you can read my mind whenever you want to? Oh well, I might as well

get used to it! Anyway, I had no idea the soldiers knew where we were and that they were coming to the girls house.

“How did you find out they were there?”

“I heard noises, woke up, paid attention, heard more noises. I got up and stood in the stairway. From the way the gangsters acted, as you call them, I figured they were pros.”

“Why didn’t you wake me up? We could have fought them together.”

“Bill, I assumed they were soldiers from one of the Illuminati groups. I did not know how many. Either way, we did not have the strength or ability to win a battle against them. They would have killed us both. By putting you to sleep, I acted like as if I was still a member of the group. It worked, Bill. We are still alive.”

“Tell me in your own words what happened to you after the kidnapping?” questioned Bill.

Gizella told her story.

“And you, Bill, what happened?”

Bill gave her a full report.

“That’s funny,” said Gizella, laughing. “You locked the head prior in the cold room?”

“Sure did. The abbot thought it was hilarious.”

They laughed together for a few seconds. Gizella became very concerned. “We are in danger, Bill. They will do everything they can to catch and kill us.”

“Well, according to what you said, they think you are somewhere in Germany.”

“Maybe, but they know you’re not too far away, and I am not leaving you. So I am in danger too.”

“You can leave me here if you want.”

“Bill, I will not leave. Period.”

“OK, nice to be in peril with you!”

"Good. The first thing we must do is go through your clothing and suitcases. They may have set a chip in there."

"I don't think so. They had no idea I would leave the way I did. But let's check anyway."

They carefully looked in both suitcases, through every piece of clothing, including what Bill was wearing.

"What about your wallet?"

"No chips in here either," said Bill after a complete exam.

"I think we are clean, Bill. Let's plan what we do now."

"You are the expert in deceiving others. I am just a simple doctor, seaman, and prophet."

"This sarcasm really hurt me, Bill."

"I am sorry. I do not mean to hurt you. I get I'm just..."

"Doubtful?"

"It's a good word. I'm sorry. Give me a big hug and let's be friends."

They stood up, exchanged a prolonged hug, held hands, and slowly walked shoulder to shoulder on the bank of the lake.

"Question," said Bill. "You said the men who kidnapped me were talking with you?"

"Yes, they were."

"Outside the head prior, the four monkey guardians kept totally silent. One could guess they were not the same people?"

"You're probably right. The kidnappers were not guards. They were professional commandos."

"So we may have to deal with them again."

"It's a possibility."

"Should it happen, don't put me to sleep. I have to get even with these guys."

"I promise. Do you think we should make it back to Orlando?"

"No, not until I get new information from my attorney."

"The Society may have his phone tapped."

"Peter and I agreed to get prepaid cell phones to communicate. Of course I never had time to buy mine, and I don't know his number. I'll find a way to get in touch with him."

"We can't go to my Montreal apartment. It will be under surveillance."

"Talking of Montreal, it hurts me to know the girls are both dead. I feel guilty."

"I have the same remorse. I am the one who planned to go to their place."

They both remained silent for a few seconds.

"Bill, I have an idea. Why don't we go to the Laurentian Mountains? We could rent a little chalet under my new name, pay in cash, and hide there for a couple of weeks."

"What about your car?"

"I rented it for two weeks. When the two weeks are almost done, I will call the company and extend the rental time."

"Good plan. Let's do it. Where are these mountains?"

"North of Montreal. You will love the area. Charming little towns. Great people. Fantastic food."

"How far is it from here?"

"I think I would like to go to Sainte-Agathe. This city has more English-speaking people than the other towns. It's about one hundred miles from here."

"It's almost six o'clock. Let's go! But let's sleep somewhere on the way. We are both exhausted."

"Perfect idea. It will be easier to find our chalet tomorrow anyway."

One more hug, one more kiss, and they were back in the car.

"I have to go back to the cloister," said Bill.

"What?"

Gizella started the engine. She looked at Bill. "Did I hear you right? You want to return to the cloister?"

"I don't want, I have to."

"What are you thinking?"

"I have a strong feeling that the abbot is in danger. He's a good man. I must help him."

"OK... Well, in this case, you are not going alone. I am going with you."

"You don't have to. Just get me close."

"As you said, the abbot is a good man. I am also a little concerned about his safety. Let's go!"

It took them about ten minutes to reach the cloister.

"Do you have a plan, Bill?"

"No, just park the car as close as you can to the gate and let's just walk in."

"If the head prior is in total command, we may be in for a surprise."

"He will also be surprised. He's not expecting us back."

"You're right. By now, he thinks I am in Germany and probably has no idea of your whereabouts."

"Well, let's show him how wrong he can be."

Bill and Gizella got out of the car and walked directly through the front gate, then up the walkway until they reached the massive wooden door. Bill decided not to activate the bell. He gently knocked on the door. He had to knock a few times before the young friar opened.

"We are closed until nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

Bill recognized the young man who was at the reception earlier.

"Don't you remember me? I was here this afternoon. The abbot is expecting me back."

"I remember you, sir. However, I will have to get the abbot's permission before I let you in."

Bill pushed the door open. He and Gizella walked in and closed the door behind them.

"I have a surprise for the abbot. He will want to see this young lady."

"Yes," added Gizella. "I was here two days ago. Remember? I am Sister Gizella. I have authority that surpasses the rank of the abbot. I am ordering you to let us through."

"Oh well, come in. What do I care? The worst that can happen to me..."

"Nothing will happen to you, young man. Don't worry," concluded Gizella.

About an hour earlier, the abbot decided it was time to free the head prior. He first went to the chapel and met with the four monks. They were kneeling, head down and completely still. It was hard to determine if they were sleeping or praying.

"Brothers," said the abbot. "I need to talk with the head prior. Do either one of you know where he is?"

The four looked at each other, then at the abbot. One of them lifted his shoulder and moved his head from right to left.

"You have no idea as to his whereabouts? Well, I have looked everywhere. I can't find him. Can you help me look for him?"

The four stood up and followed the abbot. They looked around for a while, and just before going up the stairs, the abbot said, "I heard some noise back there. Maybe we should look in the cold rooms."

The four looked at each other. Paul, who seemed to be the leader, walked toward the door of the first cave and noticed it was locked. Using gestures, he informed the abbot that he needed a key.

"I wonder why the door is locked. You want a key? I don't carry these keys on me. I will go up to my office and come right back."

The leader of the four indicated to one of his partners that he should follow the abbot. Around ten minutes later, the abbot was back with a few large keys in hand. He tried the first one. He could not unlock the door. He tried the second one, same results. The third key allowed him to unlock the door.

“Good, the door is unlocked. Could one of you open it? It is quite heavy for an old man like me.”

The leader of the four opened the door and looked inside the cell. He was pushed back by an aggressive and angry mammoth type man propelling his way out. The head prior adjusted his eyes to the light and screamed: “Why did you take so much time to get me out of there?”

He looked at his four men and at the abbot. All five were making gestures of innocence.

“I am going to clean up. I want the five of you in my office in ten minutes.”

“Head prior,” answered the abbot. “I don’t think you have the authority to order me around.”

“Authority or not, I want you in my office. Friar Paul, escort the abbot. Make sure you don’t lose him in some detour.”

The abbot was taken to the head prior’s office. A gesture by Paul invited him to sit and wait. Three of the monks stood against the wall. Paul stood next to the abbot. When the head prior entered the room, he walked directly to the abbot and asked: “Can you tell me what happened here?”

“Yes, we found you in one of the cold rooms. What were you doing in there?”

The head prior slapped the abbot with violence. The chair fell back. Paul was standing behind the abbot and prevented him from reaching the floor. A little dizzy from the blow, the abbot slowly managed to stand straight and face the head prior.

"How dare you," said the abbot. "You cannot hit me. This action will be reported to the congregation and to the authorities."

"Have you seen a man with long hair and suitcases leaving this place?"

"Yes, I have."

"Did you talk to him?"

"Yes, I did."

"What did he say to you?"

"He told me you had him kidnapped and brought here by force. He also said you were a dangerous man. I can see he was absolutely right."

"Did he tell you where he was going?"

"He did not know himself. He did not even know where he was."

The head prior stared at the abbot.

"Abbott, you know too much. I can't let you live."

The head prior pulled a long dagger from the back of his robe and rammed it into the belly of the abbot. The monk bent in two and brought his hands to his wound. His eyes showed surprise and fear.

"Why? Why?"

"Sorry, Abbot. You know too much."

Paul was still standing behind the abbot and softened the fall to the floor. The head prior looked at his victim and said: "Take him to the cold room that I was in. Let him rot."

Paul indicated that he understood.

"Send two brothers to take care of the monk at the reception. He may have noticed something."

Again, Paul acknowledged. He left the abbot on the floor. He looked at two of his men and showed the door. They knew what to

do. They left the room. Less than thirty seconds later, the head prior and the two monks still in the office saw Bill and Gizella walk in.

"Hello prior," said Gizella, pointing her gun toward him. "It's not nice to see you again."

Bill ascertained the situation and rapidly walked toward the abbot. Paul stood in his way and tried to stop him. With a power and a force unknown to him, Bill met Paul head-on and stroked him with an overwhelming blow to the stomach. Paul bent down in pain. Bill lifted his right knee and hit his opponent under the chin. Paul was out for the count. The other monk, James, charged Gizella. She shot him through the heart.

Bill kneeled next to the abbot while Gizella kept her gun pointing toward the head prior. Her eyes were traveling from the prior to Bill and the abbot.

"Is he still alive, Bill?"

"Yes, I will take care of him."

Both the head prior and Gizella were astonished by what they witnessed. A glow of light was surrounding Bill. He placed his right hand over the abbot's wound and said: "Life is giving you back your existence. You will be spared any more pain. Your wound will recede. You will live."

Seemingly tired Bill slowly stood up and helped the monk do the same. The abbot looked around him. "I thought I was dead." He touched his wound and felt no pain. His robe was covered with blood. His laceration was replaced by a fast healing scar. He fell on his knee, grabbed Bill's right hand, and kissed it. Gizella and the head prior saw the light surrounding Bill fade away.

Gizella, still standing in front of the door, was totally involved by the miraculous phenomenon she just witnessed. The head prior rushed her, pushed her against the door, and grabbed the gun from her hand. Gizella tried to fight back, but it was too late. The prior had

the gun in his right hand. He stepped a few feet away while pointing the weapon toward her.

"My dear prophet," said the prior, "you seem to have more powers than your predecessors. That makes you more dangerous."

Bill faced the prior and pointed his right index finger toward him.

"Put the gun down, Monk, before I turn you into the pig that you are."

"You will not have time, prophet. I will shoot her first."

Both men were looking at each other. It was Gizella's turn to charge the prior. She grabbed his right wrist and fought him for the possession of the weapon. The prior was a strong man and a good combatant. He showed years of experience in self-defense.

"Bill, a little help would be appreciated," said Gizella.

"Let me," suggested the abbot.

He grabbed the chair and hit the prior on the back of the head. The prior fell on his knees while Gizella regained possession of the weapon. The abbot declared: "Vengeance is mine said the Lord. But this time, Lord, this time only, may I resort to violence? I will pray more later."

The abbot used the chair a second time. He did not immediately realize that the new impact between the chair and the prior's head was fatal.

"Mission accomplished," said Bill.

"Maybe not," replied Gizella. "We still have two monks out there."

She walked out of the office. Two gunshots broke the silence. She came back less than a minute later.

"They are sleeping like two overgrown babies."

The abbot was staring at the man he just killed.

"I did not mean to kill him. Oh my god. I am a murderer."

"No, Abbott," said Bill. "Your God used your hands to rid the world of such vermin."

"What about these other two on the floor. Are they also dead?"

"Yes, they are," replied Bill.

"And the two in the corridor?"

"They are visiting a better world," said Gizella.

Bill looked at her. He was somewhat surprised.

"They are dead?"

"Gizella lifted both shoulders. It was also the hand of God."

"Oh, Lord," replied the abbot. "Five dead men."

He fell on his knees, pointed his arms toward the sky, and prayed. "Our Father, please forgive us."

"Abbot," said Bill, "today we have served Life and your God. Five antagonists were eliminated so that we can live and accomplish our respective destinies."

Bill placed his hands on the abbot's head and added: "Be in peace, my friend. Life wanted you to live. Life took their five lives in return for yours. You, Gizella, and I were only the swords."

"I have to believe that you are right. I will pray so we will be forgiven."

"Now," said Gizella, "what do we do with this mess?"

"Leave it, my child. I will take care of it."

"No," replied Bill. "Nobody else must know what has happened here today, and you are not strong enough to proceed with the cleaning by yourself."

"What do you suggest?" asked Gizella.

"Well," answered Bill, "these people had a great fondness for what they called the dungeons and what you, abbot, call the cold rooms. So the place will become their crypt."

Half an hour later, the office and the corridor were cleansed; the dead were home, and the key to their final home rested in Bill's pocket.

"So long, abbot," said Bill. "Do not have any remorse. We did what we had to do."

"What will you do with the key?" asked the abbot.

"I will throw it in deep water. I suggest you cover the door with cement. It should never be opened again."

The Abbot escorted Gizella and Bill to the front door. They found the young friar on the floor.

"Oh my god! They killed him!" yelled Gizella.

The abbot fell on his knees, raised the head of the young man, and prayed. Bill kneeled next to the abbot, placed his hand on the young man's heart and said: "In the name of Life, I want you to live."

One more time, the abbot and Gizella witnessed a glow of light surrounding Bill.

"He's not dead," said Bill. "Take him to his bed, Father. He will wake up with a big headache tomorrow, but he will live."

Bill slowly stood up, the abbot did the same.

"We owe you two lives, my son. Thank you and may the Lord be with you. I know who you are, and I know about your mission. Find the way to save humanity. We really need help."

A few hugs and handshakes preceded Bill's and Gizella's departure. Back in the car, Bill asked:

"What do you call the place where we are going?"

"Sainte-Agathe. I don't think we will make it tonight. We need to clean up. Rest, love, and sleep."

"All in that order?"

"Unless you want to love before we clean."

"I like your way better. By the way, what happened with the two monks in the hallway?"

"I shot them."

"Just like that?"

"Just like that."

"I see. Remind me not to let you play with guns when you are upset with me."

"I shall. Bill... I was very impressed by your miracles. I now totally believe in you. You are a holy man."

"I am not a holy man. I am a womanizer... remember?"

"You saved the lives of two men tonight..."

"Life did it all."

She looked at him with admiration and said, "Let's get out of this town. We will be in bed by one o'clock."

Chapter 32

Absolutely Tomorrow: Leisure and Destiny

A charming, rustic little house, on the shore of Lac des Monts in Sainte-Agathe, became a place of predilection for Bill and Gizella. They lived like a regular couple, in peace and tranquility. They made a few friends without ever revealing their covert existence.

Their residence was surrounded by large pine trees, lilac, maple, and oak trees. A small flower garden was set on each side of the back door. A gravel pathway led to a double-swing seat comfortably set under the tallest oak trees. The alleyway continued to a small dock at the edge of the lake. Two wooden canoes were resting upside down on the sandy beach.

Bill and Gizella visited most other little towns and villages of the Laurentian Mountains. They both enjoyed the grandiose sceneries. Bill had become insatiable and liked to indulge in all the French Canadian food they could find.

"These people know how to cook and how to eat," said Bill quite frequently.

Two months later, the weather was gradually changing. The days were shorter and the nights longer. The maple trees were dressing up in red to precede the arrival of winter. During the cold evenings, Bill and Gizella enjoyed holding each other in front of the old fireplace.

Occasionally, Bill visited the local hospital without ever revealing who he was. He spent time in the children's ward and secretly initiated the healing process of many fatally sick patients.

During the last few weeks, Bill communicated with his lawyer regularly. He kept changing cell phones and always used a new number. Bill informed Peter of his encounter and relation with Gizella and slightly mentioned their mutual adventures. Peter briefed Bill about the fact that politically influential people were involved in

preparing his visit to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Bill was also frequently in touch with Cape Canaveral Marina. The news was uplifting. The work was progressing rapidly. SeaLove would soon be back in the water.

Gizella did not want to know about the United Nations. Gizella did not want to know about the sailboat. Gizella was happy. She liked their little love nest. She was at peace, content and happy for the very first time in her life. Her present existence was a truce. No more violence and no more deceit. Gizella loved today. Gizella feared tomorrow.

Bill was also gratified by their present life; however, he was also concerned. But he knew the present days could not last. He often thought of his mission. His body was here, his heart was with Gizella, his soul was on SeaLove, and his mind was on the mission. Bill liked the serenity of his current life but dreamed of the ocean. He anticipated his visit to the United Nations.

During one of the warmer days, Bill and Gizella climbed Mont-Tremblant, a tall mountain challenged by skiers in the winters and by climbers during the other seasons. They reached the summit, hand in hand, and looked at the beautiful view on each side of the mountain. Gizella turned her body toward Bill's. She had tears in her eyes.

"I have to tell you something. I can't hold it anymore."

- "Tell me," answered Bill with a kind smile.

"Promise you will not laugh at me?"

"I won't laugh at you."

"I am in love with you! Bill, I love you!"

Bill lost his smile, looked at her, gazed at the surrounding, and brought his eyes back to hers.

"I love you too. I love you so very much."

They stayed in each other's arms for a few minutes and eventually walked to the edge of the mountain. They entered the

backwoods and found a hidden area encircled by tall bushes. They made love.

Around ten o'clock the next morning, Peter called Bill.

"Peter, how are you this morning?"

"I am great, Bill. I have news for you."

"Shoot!"

"On November the seventeen, at 11:30 a.m., you will be meeting the Secretary General of the United Nations. It is all set. He will be expecting you. You will be allowed to make your presentation at two o'clock on the same day."

"Excellent, Peter! How did you manage that?"

"Time, good friends, a few dollars here and there, that's all it took."

"You are a great partner, Peter. How's Carl doing?"

"Carl's got it made. All the media doors seem to be opening for him."

"Good, very good."

"By the way, both Carl and I will be there for your meeting with the Secretary General and for your afternoon presentation. We will probably arrive half an hour earlier. I want to convince him that you are logical and rational. It should make your meeting with him easier. What do you think?"

"Peter, I trust you. What you do is always well done. How's your son?"

"I'm glad you asked. He is fine. In fact, he is presently outside playing with other kids."

"That makes me happy."

"Another thing. My dad and I went to visit your boat yesterday. Bill, you have got to believe it. They are doing a great job. All the major work is done. They were putting the bottom paint on yesterday."

"Great news! Did you climb on board?"

"No, but the foreman said that all they had left to do was the refrigeration, the air-conditioning, and the navigation system. My father told him to install the best money could buy."

"Let's not overdo it now! I am not made of money."

"Dad wrote them a check for twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Hold it! Hold it! He didn't have to do that!"

"In his mind, he does. He loves his grandson!"

"I understand but..."

"Don't worry about it, Bill. It made him happy. It is a way for him to be a part of your trip. Just graciously accept the gift, won't you?"

"Thank you, Peter, and thank your dad for me."

"When will you be going to New York?"

"In about a week from now. I will call you as soon as I am in the states."

"Will Gizella be with you?"

"Yes, she will. Talking about Gizella, I have something to tell you."

"What?"

"We are in love."

"Good for you. In this case, I can't wait to meet her officially."

Still in bed, Gizella was listening to Bill's side of the conversation. He informed her of the missing details.

"Is our honeymoon over, Bill?"

"The Sainte Agathe honeymoon may be over but not our life together. You will come to New York with me. Won't you?"

"Wild horses, wild bears, or wild dangerous men could not keep me away."

"That's my girl. We have two weeks before my meeting with the Secretary General. We will spend one week here and one week in New York. OK with you?"

"If it's the way it has to be! So be it."

"Let's make the best of this week."

"What do you have in mind?"

“More sex on the top of a mountain?”

Seven days later, Bill and Gizella arrived in New York City. They found a little hotel in Greenwich Village close to Chinatown. They acted like tourists, visited the city, and got lost in the subway. Following the lazy days in Sainte Agathe, they became pushy New Yorkers. They had hot dogs and pizzas. They saw a few shows on Broadway, danced and walked Central Park. They both acted carefree, but Gizella was fearful and dreaded the future. Bill was anxious and wanted to leave the wicked city.

“Tomorrow is the big day, Bill.”

“Yes, tomorrow is the beginning of the end.”

“Will we ever be happy like we were in Sainte Agathe?”

“We will be happier. As soon as my mission is accomplished, we will be free.”

“I fear the future. Once you deliver your message to the United Nations...”

“We will sail away on SeaLove.”

“You underestimate the power and determination of the Secret Societies. They will hunt us down.”

“They are such terrible enemies?”

“Yes, they are. They are fanatics and relentless.”

“You are so worried, my dear. You will make someone a fine wife someday.”

“Bill, I am serious. I know what I am talking about. I used to be an agent for one of these Illuminati Societies.”

Bill took Gizella in his arms; he placed a little kiss on her forehead.

“The meaning of life is that it has to stop. If it is our destiny to die soon, then we will accomplish our destiny. Meanwhile let’s live. I am not quite ready to experience death. I am sure you feel the same way.”

Gizella regained control of her emotions.

"You are right. Que sera, sera! But remember. If you ever leave me, I am going with you!"

"I like that. By the way, my love. Do not worry too much. Tomorrow I want you to stay here while I go to the United Nations. It will be safer."

"What? What did you say?"

Gizella appeared very upset by Bill's request.

"There is no way that I'm not going with you!"

She walked close to him and violently pushed him in the chest as she had done once in Orlando. Bill stepped backward a few feet, laughed, and said: "Hold your horses, won't you. You pushed me like that one more time and..."

"And what? What will you do?"

"I will turn you on my knees and give your adorable butt the beating you deserve."

"You try... you just try it!"

She threw herself in his arms and looked at him. There were tears in her eyes.

"Bill, there is no way. You are not going without me."

"Listen to me for a second."

"Talk if you want! You won't change my mind. I am going."

"You're acting like a baby. What happened to the strong, logical woman I fell in love with?"

"She fell in love with you, and she's staying with you."

"Listen to me, damn it. If I go there by myself, and if I get in trouble, let's say they throw me in another dungeon, if you are with me, you will be in the same predicament. If you are not with me, you can work with our friends and get me out.

"I understand what you are saying, but, no matter what you say, I'm going with you. If we get in trouble, we will get in trouble

together. Your friend Life can get you out and then, you can get me out."

"This is not logical, Gizella!"

"Unless you tie me in this room, there is no way that I'm not going with you. Whoever said that a woman in love has to be logical? I love you, and I am going with you. Now kiss me, you big log and let's make up."

"You are something else!"

"Didn't you say something about beating my butt? I can't wait."

The next morning, Bill and Gizella took a cab.

"United Nations building, please," said Bill.

"You got it, pal."

"Where is the building located?" Asked Gizella.

"On First Avenue between Forty-Fifth and Forty-Sixth Street."

Once there, Bill and Gizella engaged the steps leading to the main entrance. They had their clearance papers and should easily be guided to the office of the Secretary General.

"I'm truly looking forward to getting together with Peter and Carl," said Bill. "They are such nice guys."

"Carl may flirt with me, you know. When I first met him at the Orlando conference, he really liked Sister Gizella."

"You mean I may lose my girl?"

"Who knows?"

They entered the building and were taken to the office of the General Secretary. Peter and Carl were sitting in the waiting room. As soon as they saw Bill, they stood up and walked toward him. A few hugs and handshakes preceded the presentation of Gizella.

"Peter and Carl, I want you to formally meet Gizella, and Gizella, meet Peter and Carl." Gizella smiled and said, "I already met Carl. Hello, Carl, hello, Peter."

"I could not kiss you when you were a nun but... Can I kiss you now."

"I would not have it any other way," replied Gizella.

Carl kissed Gizella on the cheek and blushed like an adolescent. Gizella received the same attention from Peter.

"Gentlemen, meet the love of my life."

"Very happy for you both," said Peter.

"Peter has a wife and a pretty secretary, and Bill has Gizella. The next one should be for me. Don't you think, Gizella?" asked Carl.

"Absolutely!"

After a few laughs, Peter decided to get down to business.

"Carl and I had a short talk with the General Secretary."

"Very short," added Carl. "The man abruptly left us. He had another meeting to go to."

"So we do not get to meet him?" asked Bill.

"No," replied Peter. "But everything is organized. You will give your speech at two o'clock."

"Will all the countries be represented?" asked Bill.

"I don't know," said Peter. "We asked the same question."

"The General Secretary said that he could not confirm how many UN members would be there," added Carl.

"Well, let's hope for the best," Concluded Gizella.

A few minutes later, Bill and his three companions were having a light lunch at the UN cafeteria. They exchanged information and stories. Peter and Carl were quite intrigued by Bill and Gizella's adventure.

"I'm happy to say that I don't have such events to report to you," said Carl. "As far as I'm concerned, meeting you, Bill, was the greatest thing that ever happened to me. My career is well

under way. I have given many interviews and received many job offers.”

“That’s very good,” said Bill. “You will soon become a celebrity.”

“He already is,” added Peter.

“True, but it’s the same for you,” replied Carl. “How many new accounts did you get since you met Bill?”

“Many. I had to hire two new attorneys and two new secretaries.”

“And both of the new secretaries are absolutely not attractive to me,” commented Carl.

Bill, Gizella, and Peter laughed.

“Poor Carl,” commented Gizella. “Peter did not consult you before hiring new employees?”

“No, I was totally neglected.”

“I am happy for the four of us. Life is good to us. Now, it’s almost time for my presentation,” concluded Bill.

Chapter 33

Absolutely Tomorrow: The United Nations

All delegations were not present, but most of the seats were filled. Bill stood over the imposing assembly. From the front row to the very back rows, people of different cultures and interests were waiting for Bill's first words. The interpreters representing most modern languages on earth were ready to perform their duty.

"Distinguished members of the United Nations. My speech to you will be short and to the point."

Most persons in the assembly who did not speak English or who had chosen to listen to the simultaneous interpretation of Bill's words were amazed. Bill was definitively speaking in English, but each person could hear his words in their official mother tongue. The interpreters were also subjected to the same phenomena. They were hearing Bill's words in the language that they were supposed to interpret into. Bill was not aware of that occurrence. He was surprised to see the reaction of many of the persons in the audience.

"After the failure of the League of Nations, the United Nations Organization was founded in 1945 to maintain international peace. You, the present delegates and your predecessors, have miserably failed. Think of all the wars we have had on our planet since 1945. The United Nations Organization has 192 members and almost every country or sovereign state in the world is a member. What do you do to help this world? You have done nothing worth mentioning. Poverty, inequality, and unrest are everywhere on earth."

Bill paused and added:

"Of course you can blame the 'P5,' and their right of veto. One could think that the true power rests in the hands of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council—China,

France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These five countries that seem to control the world through their respective established government are only puppets. The members of government of all the countries in the world are put in place by special interest groups. These groups are controlled by high finance and immoral Secret Societies. These Societies are the true leaders. Their abuse of power and their insatiable, unrestrained greed leads most living beings on this planet to misery. My threat of apocalypse, my warning, and my ultimatum is mostly directed toward the true leaders of this world. The rest of you make noise but have no real authority.

“My name is Bill Morrison. Most of you know my story. I had an encounter with Life, the true forces of the universe. I am sent to you by Life. I am the last prophet and the last messenger that mankind will receive.”

Bill paused and looked at his audience.

“My message is simple. Get your act together or you will no longer be. Many years ago, a predecessor of mine by the name Moses gave this world the Ten Commandments. Men did not listen. Allah, Muhammad, and Jesus also tried to lead mankind toward a better destiny. Again, men did not listen. You all have heard of the seven deadly sins. I charge the Secret Societies of greed, wrath, envy, and pride. I charge all of you of acedia and indifference. You neglect to help your fellow men, all other living beings, and earth.”

Bill paused again and pointed his finger toward the audience.

“All the wars that you tolerated and still stand for are planned and benefit the few voracious leaders. People hurt and suffer. The Secret Societies get richer and more powerful, and you... you condone. What man does to other species of this planet is also outrageous. How many forms of life need to become exterminated and extinct before you understand and react? All over this world, animals are killed for pleasure or greed. You are a rapacious

predator. Out of kindness, some so-called good souls place wild animals in zoos, where they are kept for exhibition. They gain profits out of these hopeless children of Life. How would you like to live in a cage?"

Bill looked at his audience, from left to right. He noticed Gizella, Peter, and Carl.

"The ferocious attitude and actions that you sanction against your own kind is horrifying. The forceful and cruel exploitation of other forms of life shows your lack of compassion. But worse, you are overlooking what mankind is doing to our planet. Earth is sick and you are the sickness. The human race is the cancer."

Bill bent his head down for a second. He then raised both his arms toward the ceiling and yelled: "Life, help me! They must understand."

Every person in the audience reacted. Some jumped, some showed fear, and some laughed.

"The lunacy of man is that we destroy our own world. Nero burned Rome. We are poisoning humanity and earth. Think about some of the big cities around the world. We have polluted the air to the point that citizens often have to wear a mask to protect their lungs. This pollution is not only affecting mankind. We are poisoning and killing animals, birds and vegetation of all kinds. We are also devastating tropical forests, and, in doing so; we obliterate other forms of life and destroy the oxygen that we need to breathe, remember, forests are the lungs of the earth. Also take in consideration that when you pollute the lakes, the rivers, and the oceans, we are contaminating the waters of tomorrow. The blood of the earth."

"The honest scientists of this world know how to cohabitate with earth and with other forms of life. Do you listen? Do you even try to understand? The true leaders want you to ignore the scientists and their warnings. You treat these scientists as incompetent

alarmists. I tell you today, pay attention to these people. They are a source of truth.”

“The secret leaders are criminals, and they thrive on your indulgence. They will do anything to grow their profits. You are also part of the guilt because you let these pirates and ruffians exploit men, nature, and earth. You know as I do that carbon dioxide is a greenhouse pollutant that is warming the earth and polluting the air we breathe and the water we drink. What do you do about it? You know as I know that there are many other forms of renewable alternative energies. They are more efficient, are nontoxic and nonpoisonous. The world is filled with nonpolluting and free sources of energy. Such energy comes directly from the sun. It is a permanent and renewable energy source, constantly replenished and free. The sun provides us a thousand watts per square meter during daytime. From the sun’s energy, you could run your cars and heat your homes without polluting. The Secret Societies do not want this energy to become primarily available. They make billions and billions of dollars selling fuel.”

Bill paused.

“A tremendous supply of energy saturates the entire planet in the form of gravity. Our scientists know how to work with gravity, but they are silenced by your masters. With such power, we could fly our aircrafts faster and without cost and pollution. There are many other forms of free energy that could be mastered. That would defeat the interests of the Secret Societies, and you don’t have the courage to take them on.”

Bill paused and looked at his audience.

“Spread my words to your respective government and to the people of your country. Take rapid actions against the harmful and evil leaders, or your world will no longer be. In the last few years, you have probably noticed an increase in what we call natural disasters. It’s a warning. Unless you do something to lessen the abuse of men,

the forces of nature will turn against all of us. The danger is eminent. Men's constant rampage can no longer be tolerated. The world, as we know it, is coming to an end. Men must change. As I said earlier, in a previous conference, earth has many ways to fight humans and other enemies. Earthquakes, mud slides, hurricanes, tornadoes, fire, wind, floods, volcanoes. Your food sources will be contaminated. Extreme solar flares will burn your fields and cities. All breeds of cattle, swine, sheep, and other will no longer be fit to ingest."

Bill took a long pause.

"I am done with my presentation. You may or may not believe my words. If you do believe my words, you may or may not revolt against the tyrants. The destiny of mankind is in your hands. Warn the good people. Replace the inefficient governments. Please, I beg of you, please, for the sake of your families, for our children, be the leaders you are supposed to be. Take control, save our world. Give us a tomorrow."

Bill left his audience by walking directly through the aisle that led him to his friends. Some members of the different delegations applauded, others remained silent and kept an eye on him as he exited the main room.

A few seconds later, Bill, with Gizella on his right arm and Peter and Carl on his left, walked out of the United Nations building. Without a word, they engaged the steps leading down to the street. About halfway down, a voice in the back of them yelled: "Hey, Morrison, turn around."

Bill, Gizella, Peter, and Carl stopped walking and looked behind them. In the glimpse of an eye, Bill saw a man holding a small machine gun. Bill strongly pushed Gizella, Peter, and Carl away from him. Gizella fell and rolled down the steps. The two men did not fall but ended a few feet away from Bill. Countless bullets entered Bill's body. He fell on his back and looked at the sky. Then he whispered:

“Forgive them for they don’t know what they do.”

A black cloud appeared on the western sky. A strong bolt of lightning hit the assassin. A second one hit the building of the United Nations. The citizens of New York witnessed the loudest thunderbolt to ever reach human ears. Bill trembled and the earth shook. Blood was pouring out of Bill’s torso through five deadly wounds. Gizella, Peter, and Carl ran to his side while the lifeless assassin collapsed.

“Bill, no! No... don’t die! Don’t leave me!” yelled Gizella.

“I love you,” he whispered.

“Bill, no... no...”

“Gizella, wait for me.”

She placed her lips on his and captured his very last breath.

Chapter 34

Absolutely Tomorrow: Conclusion

It was a beautiful morning. The big ball of fire just crossed the horizon and reflected its flamboyant red tones on the ocean. The fifteen knots northeastern wind was easily pushing the vessel through a wave less sea. The genoa was totally extended. The main sail was rolled on the boom. A wintry chill in the air could not impact the mood of the first mate. She was totally hypnotized by such natural beauty.

“It is so beautiful. Now I understand.”

She took a sip from her coffee mug, looked at the sail, and observed the perfect performance of the autopilot.

“SeaLove, you are such a beautiful boat. No wonder he loves you so.”

The tall mast was nicely heeling on the starboard side. After her compliment, the mast came up toward the center of the boat and returned in position.

“You understood what I said? You are saying thank-you?”

Almost six o'clock in the morning, she turned off the navigation lights and looked at the compass. The course was still 172 degree. She leaned back and had a little more coffee.

“My captain should be awake soon.”

She closed her eyes and rested a little.

“I better not. I may fall asleep. There is only half an hour left to my watch.”

She heard a loud scream coming from the cabin.

“What was that?”

She stood up, opened the companionway, and entered the salon. She could hear someone inhaling and exhaling very quickly. She entered the captain's cabin and looked at Bill. He was perspiring and articulating senseless words.

"Wake-up, Bill. I think you are having a bad dream."

She pushed him with vigor until he opened his eyes.

"OK... I'm awake. Good to see your face."

"What happened in your dream?"

"I died. Some terrorist shot me."

She placed a little kiss on his forehead and laughed.

"Well, maybe you are dead. I'm the devil receiving you in hell."

"Very funny. This can't be hell because you are an angel."

"No, you're not in hell. You were not such a bad guy after all."

He grabbed her hand.

"So where am I? You she-devil."

"You are in purgatory. I will make a good man out of you and then you can go to heaven."

"And how long will I be in purgatory?"

"Not too long. Once you are gone, I will get another bad boy like you."

"No way. I am staying here. Purgatory or not, you are my angel."

"You are so sweet. OK, I will keep you."

They exchanged a light kiss and smiled at each other.

"I love you," she said.

"I love you too," he answered.

They remained silent for a few seconds.

"How is it out there?"

"It's a beautiful morning. A little cool but all is fine."

"And what are you doing in my cabin when you are supposed to be on watch?" asked Bill with an enigmatic smile.

"I'm taking care of my captain. It's my first duty in life."

I see, well, give me a professional report."

"We are on course; our speed is stable at five to six knots."

"Good, we should reach our destination in three to four days."

"It will be sad to leave the boat."

Talking like a little girl, she added:

"I don't want to leave SeaLove."

She removed herself from the bunk and left the cabin.

"I'll be up soon," said Bill.

"OK," answered Gizella.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

If at the end of the story we conclude that Captain Bill Morrison had a nightmare, there is no need for a second part of this story.

But, if, the adventure was a dream, why did the two last lines of the story read:

“I will be up soon,” said Bill.

“OK,” answered Gizella.

Gizella? It should have been Cynthia...

You will find the answer in the sequel:

‘FEAR TOMORROW’