



KANDUDE

or OPTIMISM IN OUR TIME

Diogenes III

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Or
OPTIMISM IN OUR TIME
BY
Diogenes III

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KANDUDE
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CHAPTER I HOW KANDUDE WAS EXPELLED FROM A MAGNIFICENT ESTATE

On a luxurious estate in Barrington Hills, belonging to Karl Pozner-Maddog, lived a young man gifted with intelligence, empathy, athleticism, and a warm and genuine disposition. He combined true judgment with a simplicity of spirit and a sense of initiative, which resonated with his given name, Kandude.

The servants of the estate, known formally as Cha-Ching Manor, suspected Kandude was genetically related to Mr. P-M and/or one of his earlier wives, but he was neither adopted nor acknowledged as a relation to the Master of the Manor and/or his past and current wives. Rather, through long habit and general conviviality, and not regardless of the fact that he was tall, strong, good looking, modest, and agreeable, Kandude was allowed to hang out and afforded all the privileges, opportunities and advantages associated with Cha-Ching Manor.

Pozner-Maddog, or P-M, was an enormously wealthy corporate value optimizer. He was one of the most powerful members of the American plutocracy, a raptorial club going by no name but in which all were known to one another as the rightful owners of most of the wealth and power in the land. P-M was widely admired for his ability to surgically convert inefficient companies from superfluous enterprises with infrastructures, products, employees and health plans, into vast amounts of infinitely more valuable pure capital for investment in hedge funds and offshore accounts. His wives were known for their youth, beauty and similitude, as well as their dedication to intense personal training, plastic surgery, and Goop wellness and lifestyle products. However, in the natural course of things, each of these wives reached a state of obsolescence requiring transition, which was always handled with superb legal acumen, speed, and discretion.

P-M's son Brutus seemed in every way worthy of his father, being enrolled presently as a legacy student at the Wharton School of Business (BS pending, probationary) and already a participant in the beneficial streamlining of several bloated, inefficient and overstaffed corporations. P-M's nineteen-year-old daughter Cardoshia was charming, bright, bodacious, and universally regarded as totally hot by hetero males and many females throughout the land of ultra-high-net-worth individuals and their families, friends, retainers and sycophants. She was a young woman of innocence and virtue, conditions ironclad by her unerring sense of modesty, a familial devotion to preservation of capital, a security team, and 24/7 surveillance.

Cha-Ching Manor retained its own preceptor, Professor Cuthbert Bloughgazz, to tutor the children and young adults in residence. This was necessary and desirable due to outside educational institutions being captives of corrupt ideological groups such as state and local governments, churches not dedicated to prosperity theology, and private entities that advocated abstract philosophical learning and anemic humanism above bold engagement in the bracing gristmill of pure capitalism. The young people of Cha-Ching Manor were to a great degree insulated from the disturbing and corrupting exposure to direct shopping outside of exclusive fashion vendors, current affairs unrelated to making money, and undesirable elements such as middle-class and poor people.

Beyond his pedagogical duties, Professor Bloughgazz was the supreme oracle of the family. A polymath of titanic erudition, Professor B was a particular devotee of Economics, a disciple of the gods Hayek and Friedman, and a devoted admirer of the world's greatest applied economist, Armand Laughher, upon whose works he lavished the most fulsome of his several doctoral dissertations. He proved admirably that there is no effect without cause, and that, in this best of all possible White Christian Capitalistic worlds, P-M's enterprise model was the most virtuous of all business models, and that P-M's estate and its coherent strata of roles, goods and services was the finest estate in America.

"It is demonstrable," said Professor B, "that things cannot be otherwise than as they are; for all being created for an end, all is necessarily for the best end. Observe that wealthy people's features are malleable and perfectible, thus we have plastic surgeons. Crops need to be harvested by sturdy, low-paid, heat-tolerant field laborers, thus we have migrant workers. Wealth needs to be amassed and efficiently managed on behalf of the rich, thus we have offshore tax havens, leveraged derivatives, flash trading platforms, insider knowledge, capital gains deferment strategies, shell corporations, hedge funds, and a multitude of other market mechanisms that effectively concentrate assets upwards in the socioeconomic column. Consequently, they who assert that all is well have said a foolish thing; they should have said all is for the best."

Kandude listened attentively and followed Professor B diligently through courses in the classics, natural science, history, law, art, and the apex discipline of capitalism and its subspecialties. Likewise, he excelled outside the classroom in golf, boxing, rugby, polo, and 10-meter platform diving.

One day, Cardoshia, while walking near the conservatory, saw between the bushes Professor B (who spared no effort to expand education beyond a traditional curriculum), giving a lesson in experimental physics to one of her current stepmother's special assistants, a lovely and agreeable woman who found Professor B both generous and charming. Cardoshia had an unfulfilled interest in physics, and, as she observed the high intensity interval modality being effectuated by her more experienced elders, she became greatly flurried, quite pensive, and filled with a desire to herself conduct rigorous experiments, considering that young Kandude might be for her the most excellent of laboratory partners, and she for him.

Later that afternoon, Cardoshia happened to cross paths with Kandude just as he was thinking about entering the southern portico. She blushed, as did he, and they exchanged faltering salutations. She dropped her squash racket. Kandude swiftly bent over to pick it up, and rising to restore it innocently found himself highly proximate to her person. Their lips met, their eyes sparkled, they experienced biochemical events often associated with driving race cars at extremely high speeds and firing automatic weapons at glass bottles at the old quarry. Their hands strayed like high energy thermal sensors exploring the terrain for hot spots.

Witnessing these events on CCTV, Cardoshia's security team immediately alerted P-M, who upon viewing the video several times, had his team, composed primarily of ex-navy seals and retired Mossad officers, toss Kandude into the back of a black Lincoln Navigator, drive him to Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and throw him bodily onto the road with only the clothes on his back and a single overlooked American Express Black Card in his pocket.

Cardoshia was rushed to her rooms by a team of three androgenous Latvian trainers for a 3-hour workout and an ice bath, then whisked away to a Swiss spa run by the Sisters of Chastity. Her current stepmother, nearly a whole decade older than Cardoshia and nobody's fool, arranged secretly for dispensation of a device known to help women make important life choices, knowing that soon such devices would be illegal in many states.



CHAPTER II WHAT BECAME OF KANDUDE AMONG THE BOYZENBERRIES

Kandude, stunned by his sudden banishment to the remote wilderness, stumbled cold and hungry along a deserted road. He searched desperately for any sign of a Ritz-Carlton, opulent provincial estate, or even a country club, to no avail. Exhausted, he finally slept under a tree on a piece of ground notably less comfortable than his former European horsehair stuffed bed imported from Sweden.

The next morning, he resumed his lonely trek. After an hour or so, he heard a loud rumbling in the distance. Looking backward, he saw a huge pickup truck roaring up the road toward him. The rusty tan behemoth rode high on massive earthmover tires. Rows of lights, many broken, were mounted on the bumper, the grill and the top of the cab. Mounted in the bed of the truck were three American flags, a flag with a coiled snake, and two flags of a hypertrophic figure in flying poses wearing a strange feathery orange headdress. This heroic figure had laser beams emanating from his eyes. As the monster vehicle thundered closer, Kandude could see that there were occupied gun racks in every window.

The truck slowed down and rolled up to Kandude. Three large, bearded men dressed in camo peered out at him.

“Well, looky here, boys, we got us a real stylish Fudgie,” said the red-faced man in the passenger seat. “Whatcha doing out here, son?”

“I have been thrown out of Mr. Pozner-Maddog’s magnificent estate in Barrington Hills,” said Kandude, “and am now lost here in the wilderness.”

“Well, you might make a good recruit, son,” said the burley red-faced man. “Had anything to eat today?”

“Why, no sir,” said Kandude. “And other than an American Express Black Card that I don’t even know how to use, I have no money to pay for anything.”

The red-faced man, who said his name was Clem, arched an eyebrow. “Well, now. Hop in kid – we were just on our way to pick something up at the Patriot Station down the road.”

Using a rebar ladder welded to the side of the pickup, Kandude climbed up and into the back seat of the truck, carefully shifted a variety of shotgun shells, Grizzly tobacco tins, Colt .45 Malt liquor cans, and other appointments out of the way, and settled in. The truck roared down the road, finally arriving at a Patriot gas station, where his new friends bought a dozen Egg & Sausage McFreedomStackers, a bag full of Demolition Donuts, and 44 oz. Magnum Cola Guzzlers for each man. Kandude couldn’t help noticing that his new friends all wore large handguns, which he assumed was a necessary accoutrement in such a remote wilderness. This made him feel safer than he had since his eviction from Cha-Ching Manor.

Famished, Kandude gorged on this gas station banquet and warmly thanked his new benefactors. The truck drove far into the hills on a dirt road, stopping at what appeared to be an old mining camp. Seven or eight other monster trucks were randomly parked around an ancient two-story building. Smoke was wafting from the chimneys. The four men climbed down out of the truck and entered the building, the first floor of which was a large work room with several folding tables and chairs, a couple of refrigerators, large numbers of olive-green crates, and many military-style guns totally unlike the Italian shotguns used for sporting clays at Cha-Ching Manor. The walls were covered with American flags, confederate battle flags, and numerous other flags and banners featuring skulls, coiled snakes, swastikas, and frogs. At the center of the back wall, an 8-foot-tall poster

of the heroic figure with the feathery orange headdress he had seen on the truck flags posed in a Colonial era general's uniform. The figure's steely gaze, though subliminally suggestive of penal photography, bespoke untold fortitude, intelligence, wisdom, concern for the common man, and manifest destiny.

A burly, slightly jowly middle-aged man wearing a red baseball cap with MAWA printed on it sat at a desk in front of the steely gazing figure, tapping away on a laptop. Clem saluted the jowly man and said, "I think we found a strong candidate, Colonel."

He stepped forward and said a few quiet words to the Colonel, who nodded and gave Kandude an appraising look. "Take a seat here, son," said the Colonel, gesturing at a folding chair in front of his desk. Kandude respectfully did so.

After asking Kandude's name, the Colonel said "You may call me Colonel Stikchap. You look like a worthy young man – are you 100% Caucasian?"

Kandude, perplexed, responded "I'm not entirely certain, Colonel, although I have no reason to think otherwise. I was informally adopted as an infant and have never been very clear on my origins."

The Colonel leaned back in his chair and squinted. "Do you know who we are, young fella?" he asked. Kandude admitted that he did not, but thanked the Colonel sincerely for the kind treatment he had received from his associates.

"We... are the BoyzenBerries!" said the Colonel in a ringing tone; a tone of expectation that the utterance of this title would inspire recognition, or even awe, in any who heard it.

When Kandude evinced neither recognition nor awe, the Colonel asked: "I ask if you do not deeply love the past, present, and future President of the United States?"

"Well Colonel," answered Kandude, "he seems to be a likeable enough fellow and loves dogs, but my professor, who is among the wisest of men, told me that he is a Marxist and a relentless taxer of the plutocracy who are the engines of all production, wealth and virtue."

"No, not *that* deranged pretender," barked the Colonel. "I mean the supreme and duly elected (at this moment the Colonel and all the men jumped to their feet, rotated, and raised their right hands in a fight-fight-fight gesture toward the steely gazing poster) The One True President Tantor von Pyubengrabber!"

Kandude looked bewildered.

"I see that we need to educate you, Gucci snowflake," said the Colonel. At his gesture three of the large camo men grabbed Kandude, threw him to the floor and began kicking him with their Quack Marvin combat boots and upscale brand name running shoes. Then they stripped off his European fashion clothing and strapped him naked into an old dentist chair that had been under a tarp in the corner of the room.

The Colonel took possession of the AMEX Black Card and handed it to a bifocaled older lieutenant named Morris. Morris took two men and a battered moving van down to Milwaukee where he used Kandude's credit card to purchase vast quantities of guns, ammunition, bump stocks, grenades, MRE's, generators, condoms, batteries, apocalypse food kits, prepaid gasoline cards, body armor, first aid kits, knives, animal traps, and more guns. While he was at it, he bought lifetime subscriptions to several dozen white supremacy, Christian nationalist, and guns and combat online periodicals, as well as the wholesome and popular shooting range website "Tradwives with Guns." Unfortunately, the Black Card was cancelled after 24 hours of aggressive shopping.

In the meantime, the Colonel pulled up a bar stool in front of the shocked and brutalized Kandude. “Son, this country was created by White Christian men and their pure and devout women who knew their duties in the bedroom, the kitchen and the nursery. It is now being overwhelmed and corrupted by mongrel races, Marxists, Jews, Islamists, intellectuals, homosexuals, Californians, and other deviants. Satanic, child-molesting cannibals have taken over vast reaches of government and industry as well as many PTAs, especially in coastal regions. These antichrists are all allied in a cabal that stole the election of our One True President TvP.” At this sacred mention, the Colonel did the air-punching thing.

“They have infiltrated other elective offices with extraterrestrial lizard people. They have installed curricula in the schools that teach our innocent little White Christian children that they should treat colored people and ethnic minorities as Real Americans with voting rights, that homosexuals and surgically altered gender mutants should be allowed to use any bathroom they want and coach T-Ball, and that White Christians should be on a collective guilt trip for historical footnotes like slavery, racism, and the so-called Holocaust. And they stole the election.”

“But” asked Kandude, “didn’t President Blandanna actually win the election? I know little of politics, other than its practice should be devoted solely to promoting pure capitalism. But I thought that the election had been challenged in scores of courtrooms, dozens of election offices, many of which are run by staunch Elephanticans, and untold investigations by amateur analysts who enjoyed unlimited access to alternative facts. I don’t know anything about voting and statistics, but did read that that none of them were able to find that the election was fraudulent.”

The Colonel leaped from the barstool in a rage, overturned several tables, and emptied several high-capacity magazines from a black military grade automatic weapon into the floor and ceiling of the old building. “You have been steeped in the malignant lies of the Sorosphere like a sardine in Libtard brine!” he screamed at Kandude.

Catching his breath, he approached Kandude with an outstretched index finger. “We are going to deprogram you, son. I sense by your right-thinking commentary on capitalism and your apparent genetic makeup, which we will confirm through the Caucasian specialty genetic testing service 33 and Thee, that at your core you *are* capable of becoming a Real American.”

“Here is what you must know, young Dude. We are Sovereign Citizens. Only we, Real Americans, can interpret and fulfill the True Purpose of America and the Constitution. The corrupt federal government, DEPEGUV, has no authority over us. They have us under constant surveillance, with wiretaps, satellites, bird and insect drones, laser microphones, and - he paused and looked around - the Global Illuminati Flux Reticulum. We have taken many precautions, including aluminum foil body undersuits.”

“Once we have drawn the Libtard poison from your mind and heart,” he continued, “you will be prepared to join us in battle. You’ll become part of a special strike force to capture and execute all Donkeycrats who claim to be elected officials. Beginning here in Michigan, but rapidly moving on to other states, we will take over the state houses, the election offices, the sheriff’s desks, the tax authorities, the animal control agencies, and the library boards throughout the country. We will kidnap and neutralize Donkeycrat governors, senators and congressmen. While we strongly prefer violent solutions, the BoyzenBerries will accept a peaceful pathway if all of our enemies unconditionally surrender. It could be bloodless if the Left allows it to be.”

“In the meantime, we will reinstall our rightful President for Life,” said the Colonel, air-punching. “President TvP has restored our right to call people we don’t like denigrating names, defy mask protocols, ban books, and return women to their rightful roles as virgins, mistresses, domestic servants, voluptuous barmaids, and fertility

goddesses. He empowers us to suppress minority voting, post the ten commandments in every school, public building, and McDonalds, and threaten violence against all who oppose him. He cares deeply about us in a very personal way, and it is only because of him that we will be able to prevent White Replacement and preserve our way of life.”

“Your training of mind, body and spirit begins now. You will become a physical and philosophical warrior and will study the sacred texts: the Gospel of The Prophet Crush Limberger and the guidance of learned disciples such as Zander Jonass, Joey Rageon, Tusker Crockleson, and the falsely imprisoned martyr Stan Bunion.”

With that, the large camo guys put Kandude in a white Tyvek jumpsuit, took him out into the woods, and made him run an obstacle course featuring the PC Barb Wire Barrier, Blood and Soil Mud Crawl, and the 12-foot Hillary Clintwall. He was taught to savagely stab watermelons and hay bales and shoot at beer bottles, garbage cans, and Nanette Petosti silhouette targets from various distances and stances. However, as a mere candidate BabyBerry, he was only given one bullet at a time while a squad leader stood behind him every moment with a locked and loaded AR-15.

Upon discovering that he was remarkably good at defending himself, the combat instructors went to a three-on-one format and used heavy sticks to hone the Dude’s fighting skills. On weekends, additional BoyzenBerries and the ladies auxiliary, the red-MAWA-bonnet-wearing BekkiBerries, came out for field exercises and helped Kandude improve his performance by whipping him through the obstacle course. He was taught to drive an 18-wheeler because the Colonel needed a driver without prison tattoos, expired driver’s licenses, or DUIs, a skill he learned with remarkable speed and proficiency.

After three weeks of this intensive training, Kandude had neither grasped the sense and sensibility of the BoyzenBerry manifesto, nor, despite his athleticism, dramatically improved his times and repetitions on the exercise and obstacle courses, largely due to accumulated injuries. Despairing of enlightenment, belonging, and the joyful freedom that comes from absolute belief without the constraints of facts or reason, he finally told one of the SargentBerries that he might as well go ahead and shoot him. Colonel Stikchap was consulted and agreed that Kandude had proven to be a pathetic BabyBerry and possibly a cyptoliberal. Also, there was clearly no chance of reinstating his AMEX Black Card.

With some small regret at losing a competent big rig driver, the Colonel gave the order for Kandude to be marched down to the berm and used for Real American machine gun practice, but at that very moment a fleet of sheriff’s vehicles raced into the compound and men in body armor jumped out to subdue and arrest the BoyzenBerries.

In the whole history of the UP, there was never anything so gallant, so spruce, so brilliant and so well disposed as the two forces, each dedicated to saving America in their own way. The glorious sounds of gunfire, a veritable rhapsody of liberty, along with much screaming, stabbing and hitting, resounded throughout the valley. Kandude, unconverted even by this dazzling display of patriotic fervor, jumped on a 4-wheeler and escaped down the valley to a nearby village. He felt badly about stealing a vehicle, but thought this might be an example of the law of necessity. He wished Professor B was present to offer an analysis of situation ethics.

As Kandude was looking very poorly and had no American flag patches or feathery orange headdress hero symbols on his tattered Tyvek suit, no one in the village would talk to him or respond to his entreaties for assistance.

Finally, an old guy in a battered VW van wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt and Birkenstocks picked him up, bought him food at an organic co-op and dropped him off at a bus station, giving him enough bus fare to leave the Peninsula. Kandude thanked him warmly and asked, “are you a Real American and a disciple of President TvP?”

“No” said the old man. “I’m just a regular American and burned-out, old transcendentalist hippie. Came up here as part of the back to the land movement decades ago, but I don’t know if I can survive here much longer. The militia types are suspicious that I am not a proper Christian and exhibit no affection for guns.”

They shook hands. With the money the hippie had given him, Kandude bought a ticket Omaha and boarded the bus.



CHAPTER III HOW KANDUDE WAS REUNITED WITH PROFESSOR BLOUGHGAZZ

As Kandude got off the bus in Omaha, he stumbled across a ragged man with bloody bandages around his head and face huddled on a station floor. Filled with concern, he took what money he had left from the old hippie and offered it to the pathetic figure. The man looked up through his one working eye, staggered to his feet, and suddenly hugged Kandude, who recoiled in alarm. "Alas," said the wretch, "young Kandude - do you not recognize your longtime Professor?"

"What?" cried Kandude, "my dear Professor B? What has happened? Why are you not in your well-appointed guesthouse at Cha-Ching Manor? Has there been a disaster? What has become of Cardoshia, the most beautiful, kindly, and smokin' bodacious young woman in all the plutocracy?"

"I am so weak that I cannot stand," said the Professor. Kandude immediately helped him to a sidewalk bench in front of a nearby McDonalds, buying the Professor a medium Pepsi with his limited funds, and discretely pocketing a handful of ketchup packets to provide a bit of sustenance.

Now refreshed, Professor B said, "Our dear and beautiful Cardoshia is now in desperate straits, reduced to supporting herself via an OnlyFans adult website."

Kandude collapsed in a near faint on the ground in front of the bench, both stunned by this dire news and also dimly hopeful that he might someday be able to afford a subscription to Cardoshia's OnlyFans content with private messaging.

"How could this happen to one of the richest, most refined, and deeply modest maiden-heiresses in the entire country?" he asked.

"Ah – it was just business," said the Professor. "P-M's conglomerate was brutally attacked, using entirely legal and appropriate means, by corporate raiders, many of them well-deserved losers in P-M's earlier capitalistic triumphs. They conducted hostile takeovers of his flagship ultra-leveraged derivative funds and gutted his thimblorig precious metal IRA investments for senior citizens. They hoovered up his wonderfully profitable slumlord enterprises, themselves raising the rents, accelerating evictions, deferring maintenance, and collecting fire insurance at even greater profits, thus proving the superiority of their business model."

"Creditors took Cha-Ching Manor, stripping it of lock, stock and barrel, as was their absolute right and obligation. P-M now lives in a cardboard box on South Dearborn Street; Brutus is a corn dog specialist at a 7-11 in Cicero; and the last Mrs. P-M landed an arm-candy gig with an aging investment banker who is only worth a few million dollars and suffers from Erectile Dysfunction. I myself was dropped off at a Single Room Occupancy hotel with but a single Louis Vuitton Horizon 70 soft sided suitcase, but was then viciously mugged on the sidewalk, dispossessed of all my belongings, and left as you see me now. I have no memory of how I got to Omaha."

"This is terrible news," said Kandude, "not just for the beloved family, but for all the retired people who lost their life savings, poor people put out on the streets, and lawyers that may be unable to purchase new BMWs during the current fiscal quarter."

"Well remember, my dear Kandude," said Professor B, "that while there may be some discomfort at individual scales, overall, the human condition is greatly improved by the wondrous operations of capitalism. For private misfortunes make the general good, so that the more private misfortunes there are, the greater is the general

good. These energetic entrepreneurs, these titans of industry, these rugged individualists who seized P-M's fortune and pillaged Cha-Ching Manor using the noble tools of the free market, have thereby accumulated more wealth and power, stimulated additional enterprise, and increased the total amount of capital in the marketplace. Thus, is civilization advanced."

He continued. "Remember always that we speak of the invisible hand, not the invisible *handout*. Wealth must be taken, and success in doing so proves the virtue and just desserts of the taker. Indeed, all is for the best in this best of all capitalistic worlds."

As always, Kandude was overwhelmed with the Professor's wisdom and buoyancy even in the face of losing an eye, having a lung punctured, and being reduced to penniless beggary. He asked the Professor what they should do now, faced with penury, homelessness and no change of clothes.

"One of my most excellent friends from graduate school is now with the Beeritage Foundation and living in LA," said the Professor. If we can find our way there, we will be able to get back on our feet, obtain new designer clothing, and enjoy the Mediterranean climate."

Thus, the bedraggled pair made their way back to the bus station, where the unaffluent passengers of the bus in which Kandude had arrived, having observed Kandude's kindness to the down-beaten professor, took up a collection to buy them both tickets to LA, as well as Fritos and Ding Dongs from the vending machine to supply their journey.



CHAPTER IV WILDFIRES AND TEMPESTS ON THE WAY TO THE LEFT COAST

On the bus trip to LA, Kandude and Professor B. met a friendly Secular Congregationalist minister, a tall, thin black man, who provided additional comestibles and conversation along the way. He also popped into a nearby pharmacy at one of the stops to buy fresh bandages, topical antibiotics, and multivitamins for the Professor. The minister, who had left his husband Reginald to keep an eye on the kids and dogs in Omaha, was on his way to a conference on peace and dignity in Pasadena where he and fellow ministers hoped to share lessons in community housing and employment initiatives. Pictures of the couple and their kids and dogs revealed a happy family.

As they entered the torrid, drought stricken LA Basin, however, massive fires broke out all around them, ravaging the natural and unnatural vegetation and destroying vast tracts of low-income housing. The driver tried to escape the flames, but soon they plowed into a mass of stranded vehicles, overturning the bus and hurtling the passengers about the wreckage. Kandude, Professor B, and the Congregationalist strove to extract their injured fellow riders from the bus before all were engulfed by flames.

As they were pulling a widow and her three children, who appeared to be members of a minority group, through a window, a muscular young man in a God, Guts & Guns polo shirt kicked them out of the way in order to effectuate his own exit. Nonetheless, they managed to escape with other survivors and hiked and coughed their way through the wreckage to a place of relative safety at the base of a steep, unvegetated hill.

Relieved to be alive, the three men took stock of their situation and began formulating their next move. However, before they could mobilize, a terrifying thunderstorm suddenly swept up the valley, releasing a furious deluge on the entire countryside. Bolts of lightning struck around them. Sheets of rain and the floodwaters extinguished the vast fires, but simultaneously swept children, senior citizens, and people with disabilities away. Then, even above the cacophony of thunder, they heard a horrific rumbling and felt the earth shaking under their feet. They looked up to see a vast mudslide descending upon them from the saturated hillside.

Grasping the hands of remaining children and less agile travelers, they ran. Hanging back to assist a desperate straggler, the Congregationalist was knocked off his feet by the boiling edge of the violent flow. The polo shirt fellow was perfectly situated to reach out a helping hand, but pressed on without so much as a glance, and the Congregationalist was swept away to certain death. Kandude turned to jump after him, but was physically restrained by Professor B, who pointed out that that even the finest people must sometimes be overtaken by irresistible market forces, and this was for all the best.

As the storm receded, Kandude and the Professor found themselves huddled with a knot of survivors on a sodden knoll. Those who were able took out their cellphones to call friends and family and to get the news. Though reports of widespread death and devastation were grim, there were encouraging bright spots. For instance, Pacific Palisades, Bel Air, and Beverly Hills sustained only moderate damage, and their denizens experienced only minor inconveniences, though some were forced to decamp to their other homes in Bozeman, Monaco and Amelia Island due to unpleasant smoke conditions.

Of course, this was as it should be, pointed out Professor B, since the admirable strivers in these refined neighborhoods had proven their worthiness through the accumulation of wealth and power. Polo shirt man observed that the urban devastation created significant opportunities for spontaneous salvage for those with

determination and resourcefulness, which he resolved to exhibit as soon as passage to these new Opportunity Zones could be accomplished.

As they hunkered down to wait for the floodwaters to recede and for possible help making their way to safer ground, Kandude asked what might be the cause of such horrific fire and weather events, which, from his brief exposure to the Weather Channel, seemed to him were becoming more frequent and severe. Professor B opined that the need for such inquiry was obviated by the infinite adaptive capacity of the marketplace, whose ineluctable forces would certainly assure the best of all possible responses and outcomes.

A balding older man with a somewhat quakerish fringe beard and wearing a wide brimmed hat, khakis and a button-down shirt with rolled up sleeves, spoke quietly from where he was sitting on a rock. "Carbon dioxide." This dignified but sad older man said his name was James, and that he was on his way to a family vacation with his grandchildren when the instant calamities struck.

"Carbon dioxide," he repeated. "The more you have of it in the atmosphere, the hotter it gets. For a million years, the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was basically stable. Then we had the industrial revolution, which certainly achieved wonders. We began burning coal and oil and gasoline and natural gas in billions of cars, millions of weed whackers, and thousands of power plants. We mixed up big batches of chemicals like concrete. We built up herds of burping cattle numbering nearly 2 billion head around the planet."

"Thereby," said James, "dumping bazillions of tons of carbon dioxide into the air. This increased the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by half in less than 200 years. Voila! It's getting hotter. And there follows drought, wildfires, extreme storms, and floods. Polar ice caps melt, sea level rises, oceans warm, ocean currents are deranged, ecosystems are devastated, and agriculture is disrupted. It's a runaway train – the effects accelerate the causes of the effects. And we have yet to slow carbon dumping. It's almost too late. Indeed, it may, in fact, be too late."

The already depressed knot of survivors hung their heads lower. "Did they see this coming?" asked Kandude. "And if so, why didn't somebody do something?"

"Ah," said James, "Scientists have known about this possibility for decades, especially the superb scientists at Exxon who, enjoying the unlimited funding of petrodollars, built spectacularly good scientific models showing the dangers fifty years ago."

"However, maximizing the massive compensation, pensions and stock options of Exxon executives depended then, as now, on extracting the maximum price-optimizing amount of oil from the earth and maintaining the largest and most durable, least-regulated oil market possible," continued James. "So, they joined other oil companies and industries to mount an international denial and disinformation campaign to confuse and undermine the scientific case for doing something about it. This was a brilliant success for a long time. After things got more acute and that strategy stopped working very well, they shifted their efforts to attack the economic costs and impracticability of doing anything about it anyway. Deny, disinform, confuse, and delay."

"Dear sir," said Professor B, "I appreciate your excellent tutorial, but is this not an excellent example of the markets working exactly as they should, with competing information and points of view battling it out and ultimately yielding to the wisdom of the Invisible Hand? It seems that Exxon, seeking maximum profits, assured that adverse economic consequences would not arise from wasted efforts to combat a vast externality that had nothing to do with executive compensation and Exxon's obligation to its shareholders."

James shook his head wearily. He looked like a beaten man. Kandude gently placed a hand on his shoulder and said, "I take it that you, sir, have played a role in this alarming chronicle, and that it has been costly to you. Are you perhaps yourself a scientist?"

"Ah young man," replied James. I do belong to that profession. I always thought it was a great privilege to serve humanity by seeking truth, engaging in principled investigation and debate, gathering evidence, honoring the scientific method, and ultimately sharing useful knowledge with my fellow human beings. But most politicians, a significant number of religious leaders, and a vast part of the citizenry seem no longer interested in serious science and technology. They welcome smart phones and Ozempic, but hate vaccines and the Endangered Species Act. They love high resolution video games featuring sex and violence, but resent exhortations to buy economy cars instead of SUVs the size of Rhode Island for runs to the convenience store. They hate bad news and are annoyed by problems that are bigger than their neighborhood or last longer than a week. They strenuously resist personal responsibility and inconvenience."

"Many people think that Googling makes them smarter than scientists," observed James. "They think their pastor is a better epidemiologist than the doctors at the CDC. Proudly asserting the right to their own opinion regarding matters of staggering complexity, they weigh equally their own ignorant convictions against the expertise of rigorous and learned experts. People who wouldn't dream of telling a heart surgeon how to perform life-saving surgery on their own child are boastfully confident declaring that a world community of erudite climate scientists are a bunch of hysterical doom-mongers."

After a minute, James concluded his lament. "As always, cynical politicians like Jed Cruiser and industrialists like Dill Cokehead take advantage of fear and ignorance to maximize immediate power and profit, the future be damned." He shook his head. "I have not given up. But I am weary, and very worried about the world my grandchildren will live in."



CHAPTER V WHAT KANDUDE AND PROFESSOR B DISCOVERED AT THE BEERITAGE FOUNDATION

Once the floodwaters had receded, buses provided by FEMA and local churches arrived to transport stranded fire and flood victims to safety. Kandude and Professor B were given bottles of water and power bars and driven to a school being used as a shelter and transfer station in South LA. On the way to the shelter, Kandude saw that large numbers of people who appeared to be hanging out listlessly on the streets or occupying vast tent camps under highway overpasses. These encampments did not appear to be a result of the recent disasters; indeed, they looked rather permanent.

“What is happening with all these tents and sidewalk people?” he asked Professor B.

“This is a widespread and regrettable situation, Kandude,” answered the Professor. “These are the homeless, whose numbers are vast and growing. Unfortunately, these people have been unwilling or unable to inherit or earn enough money to pay fair market value for housing, consequently they are unable to negotiate leases or purchase agreements. Instead of rectifying their situation by successfully participating in free markets, they live on the streets, in parks, and shelters, and depend on government handouts and charity. Many of them have, alas, made this a permanent lifestyle. It’s difficult to see, I know – these tent communities and cardboard boxes are quite unsightly.”

“Are you saying that these people deserve their difficult conditions, Professor?” asked Kandude. “This all seems most unpleasant, and I find it hard to believe that many people would choose such a plight.”

“As always, you show a good heart and a concern for the human condition Kandude,” replied the Professor. “However, these are the consequences of individual choices and necessary market forces. However harsh it may seem; we know that some must fall by the wayside in order to allow the success of the greater number. After all, all is for the best in this best of all capitalist worlds.”

After arriving at the shelter, they were given lemonade and a hearty casserole and by some nice ladies and provided with toothbrushes and soap. They spent the night sleeping on cots in the gymnasium with other survivors, many of whom had tragic stories. The next morning, they were able to get a ride from a church volunteer to the campus of Ebola Christian University. There they were warmly greeted by Professor B’s friend Stephnut Hatetiller, a former political advisor to past, present and future One True President Tantor von Pyubengrabber and now Distinguished West Coast Fellow of the Beeritage Foundation.

Fellow Hatetiller was horrified by Professor B’s condition as well as their ragged predicament. Using the Foundation’s emergency PAC fund, he took Professor B to the ECU medical center for a checkup, and then brought both men to Macy’s for new clothes and appointments. Then they stopped at Denny’s for Lumberjack Slams. There, Professor B and Kandude shared much of what had befallen them.

Fellow H was shocked and appalled by their suffering. However, he did mildly remonstrate Kandude for his poor performance with the BoyzenBerries. “I am afraid that some of our patriot vanguard can be a little overzealous at times,” said Fellow H, “but the Boyzenberries are ideologically sound and capable of necessary action. I heard that the UP Chapter is now mostly in jail or in the hospital. This most regrettable. Perhaps we can find a better fit for you, Dude, as you seem like a fine young White man with a great potential.”

Fellow H brought his two friends back to his guest offices at ECU, where they settled into the nicely appointed Wannsee Conference room which had many American and Evergreen tree flags.

“Now Bert (as his oldest friends called Cuthbert Bloughgazz),” he said, “because of your well-regarded scholarship in White Christian capitalism, I’m sure we can arrange an academic appointment for you post haste at a fine Christian university. Dude, I will see if I can get you a position as an assistant coach of the ECU 10-meter diving team until we can forge a more active path for you in the battle to restore the America of our White Christian founders.

In the meantime, I want to share with you the Secret Master Plan for the Restoration of White Christian America,” - his voice deepened here - “*Total Solution 2028*.” I am sure you have heard about an aligned Project with a starter agenda and an earlier timetable, but *Total Solution 2028* is, in fact, the real deal.

Fellow H continued, “Though we recognize the political need for transitional plans and temporary diplomacy, TS2028 is the ultimate blueprint of our sacred, God-given movement. It boldly and clearly sets forth our goals, which, after you sign this Sacred Oath of Loyalty and Discretion (“SOLD”), I will proudly share with you.” Professor B signed with alacrity. Kandude signed with some inarticulate trepidation but with complete trust in Professor B’s wisdom.

Fellow H fired up his laptop and connected it to a compact projector. The opening slide of a PowerPoint Presentation had red, white and blue figures spelling out TOTAL SOLUTION 2028, with the parenthetical subtitle (TS2028) against a background of American flags and vaguely medieval looking winged crosses. Energy radiating from his person like a febrile nimbus, Fellow H presented the White Christian American Ten Commandments of TS2028.



CHAPTER VI THE TOTAL SOLUTION 2028 POWERPOINT PRESENTATION

TOTAL SOLUTION 2028 THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ULTRA SECRET – FOR DOCTRINAL LEADERSHIP ONLY

TS I. America is White Christian Nation; there shall be no secular authorities before Him

Separation of church and state is a betrayal of history, the founders, and the Constitution.

- The God Bless the USA Bible is the highest moral and legal authority of the land, and no law or regulation shall be promulgated without explicit Biblical authority.
- While non-Christians will continue to enjoy substantial rights, no atheist, agnostic, Satanist, Islamite, or Jewish person who fails to acknowledge the authority of the New Testament, nor practitioners of any other exotic non-Christian religions, nor any person who refuses to take the Pledge of Allegiance (TvP Edition) shall be permitted to hold any federal public office, occupy a civil service position higher than GS-10, or practice any licensed profession including those of teacher, lawyer, pesticide applicator, or physician, except in the practice of chiropractic medicine (per B. Windrip principles, revised edition).
- While all citizens are entitled to vote, in keeping with the authoritative principles of Carl Schmitt, persons reasonably suspected of anti-Christian sentiment may be subject to special elective safeguards, such as White Christian (WC) designed literacy tests, ability to estimate the number of jelly beans in a jar, or earnest scrutiny by heavily armed election integrity officers.

TS II. The American Government's authority is strictly limited to the enforcement of White Christian principles and the common defense

- President for Life TvP and his proper successors, wielding authority under the Divine Executive Theory recently validated by the Supreme Court, have the power and the obligation to abolish virtually all executive agencies not dedicated to Christian theocracy or internal and external security, as well as the inherently unconstitutional rules and regulations promulgated by them. This power of nullification shall extend to the Constitution, if deemed necessary by the Executive.
- A special investigation and enforcement authority, the Christian Soldiers, supervening the Department of Justice and FBI, will have extensive powers to assure that all citizens enjoy the freedoms and privileges that come from adherence to biblical rules and principles.
- The Armed Forces of the United States will be substantially reinforced, authorized to operate on domestic soil, and, based on broken window theory, will be given extensive field discretion to annihilate incipient threats to national security with nuclear weapons that will be made available down to the platoon level.

TS III. Human lives are sacred; the paramount duty of procreation shall not be hindered

- Abortion is murder. Aiding and abetting abortion is murder. Knowing about and failing to report abortion is murder. Not knowing about when one should have and not reporting abortion is murder. Abortion shall be a capital crime for all parties directly and indirectly, knowingly or negligently, involved in same throughout all the states and territories of these United States. The origins and circumstances, situational or medical, of any pregnancy are deemed irrelevant.

- The very germ cells that give rise to the creation of children are also filled with the sacred potentiality of life, and these may not be impeded at any stage by artificial means, and such contraception will be made a crime.
- Contraceptive exceptions, including mandatory orders, may be made by the Regional Subcommittees regarding immigrants and people identified individually or collectively as “others” or enemies of the people.

TS IV. The Family consists of one White Christian Man and one White Christian Women making White Christian Babies within a Christian marriage

White Christian Families are the cornerstone of America.

- WC men are strong, hard-working bread winners who love NASCAR, football, and mixed martial arts. They coach T-Ball and are capable of shooting many types of guns.
- WC women are modest, obedient, fertile and devoted first and foremost to the most sacred and glorious duties of motherhood and domesticity. Laws and educational curricula at all levels that encourage women to deviate from their biblical roles, including those promoting gender equality, contraception use by WC women, equal pay, and workforce Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), will be abolished.
- Women who bear certified WC children will be eligible for patriot baby bounties and will be afforded extra votes in all government elections.
- Divorce is biblically and patriotically incorrect; standards for granting same will be raised significantly. Men, who rarely initiate divorce proceedings, will be able to file for divorce on their own initiative, especially on grounds of procreative resistance. Women deserve the utmost respect for their role in the WC family, and they will have the ability to petition the local council of male family values counselors for permission to file divorce actions due to extreme circumstances.
- Homosexuality, same-sex fornication and marriage, gender fluidity in all its mutations, all forms of deviance purportedly represented by the acronym “LGBTQIA+” and its proliferations, transgender care of any kind, and pornography as defined by The Committee, will be criminalized.
- The WC Family Codes will be enforced vigorously by wholesome and watchful community-based family values counselors.

TS V. America is God’s Fortress. It will be defended against criminal invaders and entanglements with foreign agencies

As a Sovereign Christian Nation, America will use any measures necessary to exclude illegal immigrants and other undesirables from entering our sacred country. It is well documented that most illegal and many legal immigrants are violent, drug-smuggling gang members and rapists, and/or genetically compromised individuals who are escaping from criminal justice in or have been deported by their native countries.

- The Omnibus Exclusionary Act will identify classes of people, especially those from shithole countries, who pose a threat to the godliness, peace and ethnocultural purity of the land, and The Committee shall have absolute authority over such designation.
- Birthright citizenship will be abolished.
- The US Border Patrol and the Armed will be provided with significantly enhanced tactical equipment including appropriate combat aircraft equipped with XM915 Gatling guns and cluster munitions.

- The **Tantor von Pyubengrabbler Memorial Border Wall and Mine Field** (TvPMBWMF) between the U.S. and Mexico will be completed and continuously improved in accordance with Lean Six Sigma methodology. Because of its mission, grandeur, and heartwarming operational culture, the TvP MBWMF will also serve as a major patriotic tourist destination.
- Illegal aliens and their sponsors, associates and enablers already inside this country will be identified and deported.
- Expanding on existing prototypes, humane, high throughput internment camps will support swift deportment through an integrated system of Rapid Expulsion Portals.

TS VI. White Christian Capitalism is the fundamentalist economic system of WC America

It is recognized that the free market, guided by the Divine Hand, is the font of all productivity and prosperity. The merits of Christian capitalism reach back the earliest colonial days of America. Entrepreneurial WC colonists, because of their superior practices and products, were rapidly able to out-compete indigenous entities for a commanding market share of America's land, resources, goods and services.

- In order to fully realize the freedom and dignity that attends divine market forces, Social Security, Medicare, federal funds for Medicaid, and subsidized health care in all forms will be abolished.
- Taxes will be drastically reduced, especially for extremely high net worth capitalists who drive the economy from within, drive trickles down into floods of descending wealth, and create all opportunities for others to prosper.
- Children will be unleashed to exercise the virtues of honest work in the conditions and hours needed by industry to meet their financial goals. Other practices that increase competitiveness and provide flexibility for both capital and labor, such as low wages, prosecution of union agitators, part-time employment, and making almost everybody a subcontractor, will not be impeded by suffocating employment laws.

Free markets are critical to the exercise of WC capitalism. However, Globalism is a satanic concept that gives other nations equal standing with WC America, dilutes WC American moral fiber, weakens WC American initiative and character, and represents an existential threat to American economic independence.

- Strict embargos, tariffs, duties and other protective measures will be applied to stem the foreign product and services invasion and protect American's divine enterprise system.
- Strangling relationships such as NATO and the UN will be suspended or cancelled.
- Engagements involving the security interests of foreign nations, especially countries being rightfully invaded by Russia, will be terminated.

TS VII. Jesus is our Master Teacher. A White Christian education is essential to promote a healthy, righteous, and God-fearing republic

Public schools have long been instruments of secular corruption, false history, and "scientific" heresy.

- The Department of Education and all teachers unions will be abolished.
- The decayed public school system will be replaced with a God Bless the USA Bible-based charter school system. Non-Christians will be able to form their own self-funded schools, which will be granted conditional accreditation as long as nothing in their curricula departs from divinely inspired state policy, makes White children feel bad, or promotes criticism of the President for Life.

All citizens of WC America enjoy a sacred right to free speech. However, free speech is not an absolute right. Free speech may not be used to promote communism, deviance, disgusting sexual mores, Critical Race Theory, or non-biblical values. Nor may it be used to defend speech, books, or other messaging content that makes WCs feel bad about historical events and sociological phenomena that aren't their fault.

- Mothers for Purity will be given all necessary powers to define and enforce appropriate codes and standards, including prudent administrative measures such as selective quotation and misrepresentation, denouncement, banning and incineration.

TS VIII. God is the Chief Scientist of the Universe; His design and operations reign supreme

Approximately 6000 years ago, God created the world, along with our original White ancestors, Adam and his fertile companion Eve. He intelligently designed all of the Earth's physical systems, especially coal, oil and gas, and all subhuman animal and vegetable life. Human scientific and technological endeavor is a noble and powerful enterprise. It has brought humans many blessings, including the internal combustion engine, assault rifles with fully automatic conversion kits, the electric light bulb, Viagra, the telephone, fertilizer, televangelism, airplanes, computers, and collagen injections. However, all disciplines are subject to abuse. Certain atheist "scientists," clothing themselves in sophisticated credentials and arcane formalities, and coddled by the elite universities, have propagated false ideas that undermine the Christian faith, corrupt our youth, and undermine sound White Christian American policies. Three particularly repugnant false ideas infect our nation today: the *theory* of evolution; anthropogenic climate change, and vaccine efficacy.

- All three of these false doctrines will be wholly abolished.
- Their proponents, including sympathetic reporters and abettors of these views, will be criminally prosecuted for heresy.
- Please see the **Heresy Addendum** below for a fuller explanation of these pernicious heterodoxies.

TS IX. GG&GMAG: White Christian Americans have the right to defend their freedom, and they deserve to be safe at home and on the streets

While the Omnibus Exclusion Act, by stemming the noxious invasion of migrant criminals, will substantially reduce crime in WC America, other internal threats to wives and children remain.

- Police forces will be given the weapons, immunities, and expanded field discretion necessary to stop crime at its very roots. Permissive enforcement, prosecution and sentencing practices, such as warning before shooting unarmed suspects, allowing people of color to drive cars wearing hoodies and not keeping their hands visible at 10 and 2 on the steering wheel at all times, prosecuting minors differently from adults, reminding people of their rights, giving short sentences that amount to publicly funded vacations before criminals return to the streets refreshed, and granting parole, will be annulled.
- Capital punishment will be levied for truly serious crimes, such as murder, rape committed by minorities or immigrants, breaking windows in White neighborhoods, resisting orders during routine traffic stops by sassing police officers while being a minority, and treason. Such executions will be conducted swiftly and publicly (30-60 days in most cases), representing a significant savings of cost and time.

It is impossible to maintain our rights, freedom, safety and the American way without overwhelming firepower. The right to bear arms, up to and including advanced rocket systems, and to carry them on one's WC person at all times and in any place in America, shall not be infringed.

- Stand-your-ground laws will be reinforced nationally to assure that WC Americans can defend themselves within a robust "portable zone of freedom and safety" including defensively shooting anyone posing a threat by using or having proximate or remote access to weapons, using unpatriotic

language (especially insults to the President for Life), or belonging to a minority and/or leftist group whose presence could create a plausible threat to physical and emotional security, or anyone who is an illegal alien.

TS X. White Christian Americans have a right to dominion over the Promised Land

Entire coastal regions and many urban centers, especially those hosting virulent nests of effete intellectualism (Universities) are consumed by a treatment-resistant spiritual and political sepsis. The proper body of WC America must be protected from the ravages of this infection. It is therefore necessary and proper to establish a transformative overlying national jurisdiction that reflects and distinguishes these WCA Red Prefects from pustulant leftist Blue Prefects.

- This Red & White vs. Blue Prefecture System (RWBPS) will supervene the current federal political geography, constitute the new voting districts for all federal elections, and provide a more granular framework for the application of sanative policies.
- Federal funding will be severely restricted in Blue Prefects, pending restoration of appropriate beliefs and policies.
- A RWBPS electoral college system, created by the Founders for election of the President, will be installed for all elections of representatives of the new prefects to both houses of Congress to prevent WC Americans from being outvoted and tyrannized by the anti-American majority.
- Freedom Cities will be established in Red Prefects and will enjoy the resources necessary serve as magnets and models to the rest of our Christian Nation, including access to reparations for WCs who have suffered discrimination, oppression and displacement over the past decades.

TOTAL SOLUTION 2028 HERESY ADDENDUM

A. The Heresy of Evolution.

The false *theory* of evolution insults both God and man by claiming that our White ancestors descended from monkeys. It denies extensive fossil evidence, especially contemporaneous footprints, which proves that dinosaurs and humans coexisted. It licenses support for human genetic modification and excuses sexual and gender identity deviance.

- While it will be permissible to acknowledge that many people actually believe in the *theory* of evolution, all God Bless the USA Bible-based theocratic charter schools and federally funded universities and research institutions will teach and adopt Creation Science as the only valid, evidence-based explanation of the biological and geological world.
- Likewise, all federal laws, policies and implementation programs will be founded on Creation Science.
- The national teaching curriculum and scientific guidelines for federal research and policy will be curated by distinguished scholars from the Museum of Intelligent Creation and Design in Babeltown, Tennessee, which panel will be chaired by internationally renowned biologist and scientific historian Candell Bacon.

B. The Heresy of Anthropogenic Climate Change

God intelligently designed the earth, its atmosphere, its biosphere, and its natural dynamics including weather, climate, and propagation of demons via the luminiferous ether. Climate and weather have undergone significant natural variation for over six millennia. It is a ludicrous and dangerous fabulation to claim that adverse

climatological effects could arise from man's beneficial use of God-given fossil fuels over just a couple of centuries. Even a child making a snowman in their backyard under the watchful eyes of their WC parents can see that global warming is a hoax.

- Federal funding for all climate change research and alternative energy technology development will be terminated.
- WC America will withdraw from all international scientific and policy activities purporting to address spurious anthropogenic climate change.
- All funds thereby saved, and more as necessary, will be directed toward incentivizing more rapid drilling and production of oil and gas ("DrillBabyDrill") and increased extraction of coal, including exploitation of "orphan" coal deposits such as low-grade lignite, whose production has been artificially depressed by misguided environmental regulations.
- Licensing of new coal fired power plants will be expedited.
- Electric Vehicles will be subjected to a gargantuan tax, unless manufactured by industrialists who give millions of dollars to loyal elected officials.
- A supporting technical circular "The Fuels of God" will be published shortly.

C. The Heresy of Vaccination

During better times in America, vaccines *may* have occasionally helped protect public health. In recent decades, however, a malignant partnership has emerged between left wing public health agencies intent upon genetic modification and social control of WC Americans and Vax Pharma. Working closely with the Centers for Disease and Christianity Control, Vax Pharma created a vast market for vaccines to treat viral diseases that are either hoaxes or that they themselves have unleashed on the unsuspecting public. Significant evidence, all of which has been covered-up, indicates that these vaccines have killed vastly more people than the diseases they are purported to combat. We are talking tens of millions. Moreover, mass vaccination is being used to inject tracking and control microchips, synthetic hormones that trigger homosexuality and gender dysphoria, and genes from docile domestic animals such as sheep and Labrador retrievers.

- Government-sponsored vaccine research and distribution will be terminated.
- So-called "public health" measures, such as closures of schools, churches and businesses and the use of masks, will be prohibited as unconstitutional violations of the right to gather, exercise free speech, and breathe freely together in confined spaces regardless of symptoms in the manner of the Founders.
- The former head of the CDCC, Dr. Anubi Faustus, who is well known to have sold his soul to Vax Pharma, will be arrested and indicted for crimes against humanity, including undermining public access to proven viral disease remedies such as Ivermectin, hydroxychloroquine, proctoscopic ultraviolet light therapeutics, volcanic ash inhalers, and bleach colonics.



CHAPTER VII KANDUDE LEARNS HOW TO RESTORE A WHITE CHRISTIAN NATION

Professor B and Kandude were overwhelmed by the scope and vision of US2028. As they absorbed what they had just seen and heard, Fellow H assured them that this top-level agenda was undergirded by thousands of pages of research, analysis, and biblical authority, along with 920 pages of detailed implementation plans.

As they were digesting this awesome Master Plan for Restoring WC America, a middle-aged, balding, man with a double chin and wire-rim glasses entered the room. He and Fellow H exchanged warm greetings and introductions were made.

“I am honored to present Professor Doctor Jake Westmannischer,” said Fellow H. “Professor Doctor Westmannischer is one of the greatest Christian constitutional scholars and historians in the country. While hundreds of scholars were involved in the development of US2028, Professor Doctor Westmannischer is one of its principal architects, with paramount responsibility for assessing the citizenship of left-wing office seekers and constitutional mechanisms for the correction of invalid voting practices and outcomes.

“First of all,” opened the distinguished Professor Doctor, “I welcome you to the sanctum sanctorum of our movement to restore White Christian America. This is a privilege not lightly granted, and our trust in you and your protégée rests solidly on the excellent work done by you, Professor B, on the divine imperatives of White Christian capitalism. What do you think of our Master Plan, Total Solution 2028?”

“Professor Doctor,” replied Professor B, “I must say that I have always been a great admirer of your work, and appreciate what you are doing to save America from electoral fraud, including that from immigrants like Harriet Camelot and Hussein Bombrackio who assert fake citizenship, cast illegal ballots, seek elective office, and support taking important agricultural and hospitality jobs as well as governmental benefits from White Christian Americans. It is historically accurate that White Christian Capitalists striving in tandem for salvation and profit, are the ones who built this, the richest and most powerful nation on earth.”

Fellow H and the two eminent scholars looked over at Kandude. He spoke haltingly. “Though I had the privilege of studying under my beloved Professor B,” he said, “I recognize that I do not have the knowledge and wisdom to judge these complicated matters. I have been taught the primacy of capitalism and the one true Christian faith. Indeed, my generous benefactor, P-M, hosted a visiting Presbyterian chaplain weekly at Cha-Ching Manor. Although he himself was unable to attend services due to his business obligations and golfing schedule, he always described them as works of God.”

Kandude hesitated. “If I may be so bold, Professors, I do wonder, no doubt due to my own ignorance, about some of the features of the Master Plan. For instance, even though I have learned that America is a democracy, there seem to be extensive provisions for discouraging large classes of people from voting, and even overturning their votes. When I mentioned to Colonel Stikchap of the BoyzenBerries that I had read in many places that President Blandanna actually won the last election, and that claims of it being stolen were not supported by any evidence, I was severely beaten, but the Colonel did not provide me with corrective facts. Also, I have met some people who are not White Christians who seem to be fine human beings. The Master Plan seems like it might treat these other people a bit severely.”

Professor Doctor Westmannischer arched an eyebrow at Fellow H and Professor B. “Not to worry, Professor Doctor” hastened Professor B. “My young student Kandude has an extraordinarily kind and innocent heart, but clearly has yet to fully consolidate his experience into a morally coherent ideological framework.”

Professor Doctor Westmannischer sighed and spoke gently. “My dear Kandude” he said. “I am warmed to see your generosity of spirit and optimism about the goodness of men and women of all persuasions. Let me share a few thoughts as you make your journey with us toward America’s divinely ordained state.”

“First of all, Kandude, America is actually a Republic, not a democracy. This means that the Founders intended that wise and righteous White Christian men, steeped in scripture and possessing an exclusive understanding of the original intent of our Founders, must aid the People toward realization of proper beliefs and proper ends. So-called “facts” must never be allowed to triumph over higher Truths,” continued Doctor Professor Westmannischer. “Indeed, as one of our Ministers of Information, Katie Congalle, has pointed out, it is right and proper to provide alternative facts to counter evidence that does not support correct belief. Did more people check the box for Pretender Blandanna? That is simply not the right question. The higher Truth in today’s America is that there are correct votes and incorrect votes. A fraudulent election is one that results in a fraudulent outcome. Devolving our United States into a heterogeneous, liberal, atheist nation is by definition a fraudulent outcome. Installing anyone other than our True President for Life, Tantor von Pyubengrabber in the White House, is by definition, a fraudulent outcome.”

“It is important to keep in mind,” continued the Doctor Professor, “that our Good People, legacy White Christian Americans, though pure of heart, are not great thinkers. Indeed, the majority of people are not capable of thinking, but only of believing.”

“Our Good People, especially the legion of forgotten men, do not require or even want petty facts, statistics, or policy arguments. They want to be restored to their proper place as the dominant and rightful citizens of a White Christian Nation. When it comes to informing and mobilizing our believers, an ounce of patriotic emotion outweighs a ton of facts. Slogans trump philosophy. Colorful banners vanquish learned manifestos. Uniforms and flags are more powerful than books. Propositions aligned with legitimate White Christian aspirations and a higher Truth must be wielded like hammers until they pound malleable minds into the right shape, which, once taken, is almost impossible to alter. These realities place a heavy and sacred burden on our leadership. They also dictate the tools that can and must be used to forge our destiny.”

At this point there was a breathless pause. But Fellow H, a fervid glow emanating from his rodentine features, stepped in. “At this moment in history we need to be crystal clear,” he said. “We are fundamentally at war. The Donkeycrats and their fellow travelers are not our countrymen; they are our enemies. We already know the outcomes that must be achieved. This is now necessarily about power, not policy. Some transitional fossil leaders, such as Tode Gangreene and Lerch McCrabbish, have actually long recognized this. But we are taking the strategy to the next level.”

“We, the New Elephanticans, are currently a minority in this country,” continued Fellow H. We have entered a historical state of exception. But by using the electoral college, gerrymandering, voter management techniques, and (thanks to Felix Felis) our embeds on the Supreme Court; by employing martial law, the Insurrection Act, the Comstock Act, and virtually unlimited executive authority; by taking over all elective and appointive offices at the state and local levels in as many states as possible; and by mobilizing more proper believers than those of the fractured, polyglot leftist horde, we can take permanent control of our great country. Give our Good People their rightful place and they will gladly give you the power to maintain it. In a historic emergency, autocracy may in fact be democracy’s most authentic expression.”

Professor B reflected for a moment, then observed, “despite some unfortunate features born of discord, clearly the market has created these conditions; all, therefore, must be for the best.”

Kandude, with some trepidation, felt the need to ask a question. "If we are to serve a noble cause, should we not have noble leaders? Though I understand that much of the news is fake, I have heard that President TvP cheats on his wife, sexually abuses women, cheats at golf and business, is a convicted felon, and almost never tells the truth."

There was dead silence for a full minute.

"Just among us, and forever to go unspoken outside our sacred trust," said the Professor Doctor, "it is true that President TvP is not a person that we would even think about allowing in the same state as a Christian summer camp attended by our daughters. Nor is he a man upon whom we would rely upon to better understand history, economics, filling out a golf scorecard, law, theology, civility, ethnology, phonetics, autobiography, current events that aren't about him, or geopolitics. Regrettably, he does not actually give a tinker's damn about the Good People. He has never, and will never, sit down in a local café with some hayseeds in Ogallala and have a corn dog while listening to or understanding their concerns."

Fellow H was scowling now but didn't speak.

The Professor Doctor ignored Fellow H. "Indeed, gentlemen, we know that President TvP basically has no ideology, no ethical core, no shred of empathy, and is functionally illiterate. However, he is undeniably a true genius at propagating fear and its close cousin, hate. He knows that cultivating a grievance is simpler and more appealing than addressing complex issues. He realizes that angry people are inclined to believe that others gain ground only by taking theirs. Indeed, many of the Good People have gone beyond initial explanation that he is an imperfect vessel and now actually believe that he is a good man and a good Christian, or even that he is an emissary of God. Many credit his survival of assassination attempts to divine intervention. The beauty of such a cult following is that nothing to ever needs to be explained," said the Professor Doctor. "Their absolute loyalty is impenetrable. Imperfect though he is, in this moment he is our imperfect perfect tool."

"But doesn't all that actually make him all the more dangerous?" inquired Kandude.

"Ah, well" said the Professor Doctor, "danger is relative. "He loves our agenda and will advance it, though, unfortunately not for its just ends, but solely as a vehicle for personal power and retribution. Fortunately, his list of enemies and ours is much the same. He can be steered by flattery, aggrandizement and favorable comparisons to Vladimir Putin. Best of all, he is old, as physically fit as a contestant on the My 600-Lb. Life reality show, and consumes a diet consisting primarily of triple cheeseburgers and Diet Coke. We need him to stick around just long enough to take power and reforge America on the anvil of White Christian theocracy."

Fellow H looked deeply unhappy about these unlaudatory comments about his President for Life, but with a bit of a grimace he checked his watch and announced that they needed to head out for an important patriotic field exercise.



CHAPTER VIII SWEEPED UP IN THE HORRORS OF THE MEXICAN BORDER INVASION

Fellow H invited Professor B and Kandude to join him on a field trip to the Mexican Border in Arizona where supporters planned to conduct joint training missions with the County Sheriff's office. They flew out of John Wayne Airport to a small airstrip in close to the Mexican Border in Arizona in the Beechcraft King Air 260 that had been donated to Beeritage by longtime patrons, the Beers family and their foundation, Sons of Adolph.

They landed at the modest airfield just as dusk was falling. Kandude anxiously observed that it was filled with scores of decorated pickup trucks just like the ones he encountered at the BoyzenBerry compound on the Upper Peninsula not so long ago. Dozens of men wearing an assortment of military, paramilitary and hunting outfits, along the occasional Hawaiian shirt, were milling about the field. Most were outfitted with elaborate equipment vests and belts and carried patriotic AR-15s with 30 or 50 round magazines, along with handguns, combat knives, ammo pouches, and bandoliers. Many of the weapons featured elaborate tactical accessories, including what Kandude recognized from his failed BabyBerry enlistment as night vision scopes. The assemblage looked like a blend of army rangers and post-apocalyptic road warriors from a Mad Max movie.

The Beeritage delegation was greeted by Sovereign Sheriff Mac Dickman, whom Fellow Hatetiller congratulated for his excellent auxiliary border control efforts. Sheriff Dickman sported a sheriff's star patch above his left pocket and another patch with a Colonial era soldier figure on it with the title "Vow Stickers" above his right pocket. He looked a bit skeptically at the rodentlike Hatetiller in his khaki pants, polo shirt and faux BDU jacket shell, but observed that Kandude looked like a fine young White patriot who might make an excellent contribution to border security.

"Our role is critical now that the Pretender Blandanna has completely opened the borders," he said. "Thieves, rapists, moral degenerates, fentanyl smugglers, and mentally defective alien vagrants are pouring into the country by the millions. They are literally driving white people out of the farm fields, out of the kitchens, and out of lucrative hotel housekeeping opportunities. We are here to take back our borders. For the moment, we are in an interstitial support role, but soon enough we will be leading the charge to apply higher standards of interdiction here at the border."

Fellow Hatemiller withdrew to hold council with the political liaison, and Sheriff Dickman turned to Kandude and Professor B saying, "You two will be on night patrol. You can't understand the magnitude of this problem until you see hordes of brown people scuttling across the border like swarms of cockroaches. Saddle up city slickers."

Kandude and Professor B climbed up into the back of a colossal-cab, long-bed diesel monster truck with a couple of heavily armed border patriots. These two folded down the retractable American and coiled snake flags, as well as the flying feathery orange headdress superhero figure banner. "Hunting mode," explained one of the patriots, a boy who looked to be about 16 who was carrying enough firepower to personally assault and defeat Luxembourg. The other man, a rough looking fellow in his thirties, wore a red MAWA ballcap. There were four additional men in the cab, guns sticking out the windows. They roared off to the South on dirt roads, leaving a plume of dust and diesel exhaust billowing in their wake.

At one point, they slowed and crested a slight rise before stopping. All the men in the cab dismounted. They focused their night vision binoculars at something a few hundred yards away. "Water barrel cache left by liberal sympathizers," said the older man named Bo "no-last-names" who had been in the front passenger seat. "You know what do to, boys." All six of the men unleashed a mighty barrage on the water barrels, laughing and

whooping with patriotic fervor at the prospect of denying water to invaders who certainly deserved to die of thirst.

The team drove a few miles further down the road and then took up a position looking south, with the body of the monster truck largely obscured by a big creosote bush. The team members again deployed their night vision binoculars. It was quiet and dark in the quarter moon. There was a fragrant smell of dirt, creosote resin, and grass, occasionally overpowered by the harsh tang of smoke from the cigarettes the militia men lit with electronic lighters to avoid visible signatures.

About an hour later, one of the patriots hissed and pointed. After taking a look, the teenaged patriot handed Kandude night vision field glasses. Kandude saw was a group of perhaps two dozen people plodding slowly across the desert, about a third of them children. They carried small backpacks and water bottles. One mother was carrying a baby. They appeared to be following a small, vigorous looking man carrying a large rucksack. They did not look like rapists and drug smugglers to Kandude.

Bo jumped up and waved the patriots into the truck. "Remember men, we're just going to scare them," he said. "But don't worry, the day that we can put the vermin down is coming soon. In the name of God, America and President for Life TvP, let's herd them back to their own shithole country."

The monster truck fired up and roared after the walkers like a wild beast. The travelers scattered and ran screaming, lit up by crazily veering headlights, LED spotlights, and lightbars as the truck careened across mounds and through bushes after the hapless invaders. At the edge of the kinetic field of dazzling light, Kandude saw the leader of the fleeing group bolt off into the darkness.

As the truck momentarily stabilized on a flat stretch, Kandude saw the MAWA hat man rise up and take aim at a knot of scattering runaways as he clicked a knob on his AR. Kandude, without a thought, rotated at the hips and delivered a straight right to the man's cheekbone, using excellent technique from his boxing summer camp days. With his AR firing fully automatic through a flaming arc into the sky, MAWA hat man flew over the opposite rail of the truck bed and into the dark. The driver, distracted by the burst of gunfire from behind, plowed into a hummock and the truck heaved and rolled over in a violent crash.

Kandude was thrown from the truck, lighting upon a bushy mound of sand. Suddenly it was silent, except for the rotation of upturned tires and a steaming sound from the truck's engine. Dazed, Kandude sat up and saw Professor B's legs protruding from beneath the still brightly lit wreck. A couple of men were groaning and crawling out of the inverted cab. Staggering to his feet, Kandude saw a little girl, wide eyed and lost, staring at the destruction. He ran over, picked up the little girl and headed out into the night.

After trudging around for an hour, he happened upon a knot of the runners huddled in an arroyo. One of the women leaped up and rushed over to take the little girl from Kandude, crying with joy and relief. She hugged her child and Kandude. The others gathered around to greet Kandude and find out what had happened at the wreck and whether he thought the militia men were still after them. They shared water and trail mix with Kandude as others straggled in to rejoin the group, except for the leader, whom the runners called "El Coyote."

At dawn, the group decided to try to continue on without El Coyote, a couple of the men having made the trip before. However, before they had trudged along for many miles, a small plane was seen circling overhead. Within the hour, a phalanx of official-looking pickup trucks and Chevy Suburbans bore down on them. Armed men, this time in legitimate uniforms and carrying much less tactical firepower than the Vow Stickers, rounded up the entire group and drove them off to a large camp surrounded with barbed wire. There, they were logged

in and separated by gender, then randomly assigned to rustic quarters, except that children under six were sometimes allowed to stay with their mothers. The name on the main gate was Camp Maytag. The officers looked at Kandude with contempt. Some, under their breath, called him a traitor to his race. They were less than gentle with him as they herded the men into their huts.

Kandude was shocked by the conditions in the camp, which consisted of shabby, crowded barracks and tents, pit toilets, terrible food, and no fans or air conditioning despite the sweltering heat. At first, his attempts to talk to the other prisoners were met with suspicion and stony silence. But soon, the word about his role in the desert attack got around. The men told him that many of them had been captured in the desert, but that others were rounded up in workplace raids, sweeps through Latino neighborhoods, and Driving while Brown. They indicated that Latinos were increasingly being stopped, challenged, insulted, and often detained regardless of their citizenship status. Sheriff's deputies often refused to acknowledge any documentation as legitimate.

Kandude found that his fellow prisoners, rather than being murderers and gang members, were overwhelmingly kind, scared, deeply concerned about the women and children in the camp, and desperate to rejoin and work hard to support their families in the US, Mexico, and other Latin American countries.

After several days in the camp, Kandude happened upon a Mexican-American journalist, Manny Mendoza, who had been arrested while investigating conditions on the border and in camps. He said that Camp Maytag was run by the County Sheriff, with the assistance of a deputized Immigration Posse that included, from time-to-time, celebrities from professional wrestling, country music, right-wing pseudo-journalism such as Faux News and Newsmux, and network reality shows.

The whole operation was essentially independent of efforts by the U.S. Border Patrol and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement because those agencies coddled illegals and wasted too much time worrying about keeping family units intact. The Libureaucrats also offered unlimited opportunities for false asylum applications. They were bogged down in administrative processes that failed to comprehend the inherent criminality of illegal invaders and people who looked and talked like them.

As Kandude and Manny were talking, three large deputies pushed their way through the crowded barracks, grabbed Kandude by the arms and frog marched him out into the yard and across to a portable office.



CHAPTER IX THE SHERIFF DISCUSSES THE FUTURE OF BORDER MANAGEMENT

Kandude was shoved into an office, where he was greeted by a blast of delicious air conditioning and the sight of a withered, great-grandfatherly looking man sitting behind a metal desk. He was wearing a sheriff's uniform with a large silver badge, numerous medals, and other elaborate insignia that included rows of at least six stars on his collar. The hoary Sheriff motioned Kandude to sit. Two deputies stayed in the room and stood behind him.

"So, you're the infamous Coyote Blanco!" said the hoary Sheriff. "I am Sheriff Emeritus JoBob Crappaggio. You can call me Sheriff JoBob." He spoke with supreme confidence and authority as he looked Kandude over with rheumy eyes. "What I want you to know," he said, "is that we have no love for race traitors and criminal sympathizers around here. What I want me to know is who you are, why you are smuggling criminals across the border, and what genocidal White Replacement organizations you belong to."

Kandude was paralyzed by this sudden quandary. He couldn't very well tell the story of his involvement with the militia border patrol, as that could lead to the discovery of his interference with their operation, the demise of his beloved professor, and the probable death of one or more Vow Stickers who were clearly allies of Sheriff JoBob. Kandude had been caught with a band of illegal immigrants crossing the desert. He had no money or credentials of any kind. He had nobody to call. He said nothing.

"Let me tell you a few things, traitor coyote boy," said Sheriff JoBob, squinting his beady eyes. "This camp is merely a prototype for the larger and more efficient detention and deportation camps that we will be setting up soon to handle the migrant hordes. The generosity of our border control patron Paulson Melonbonker has enabled us to put the foundations in place. Since immicriminals and their sympathizers and abettors actually have no civil rights, soon we will be able to deal with them more efficiently."

"My fellow Constitutional Sheriffs, who are actually the supreme law officers of the land, will take over border enforcement and interdiction leadership responsibilities. We control virtually all of the counties along the border and have counterparts throughout this once great land. Most of the illegals simply aren't going to make it across the wall and through the Severe Interdiction Zone. The survivors we round up are going to be examples, word of whom will spread south across the border and discourage more would-be invaders."

"This," he said, making a sweeping motion with his hand, "is a place of punishment and restoration. Camp Maytag is a place to wash our country clean. Immicriminal work details will expand and repair the wall. They will dig punji pits and plant mines in 120-degree temperatures in the SIZ. They will build out and maintain the camps and the network of roads."

"Then, assuming no construction, bad weather, falls down the stairs, or gang-related mishap befalls them, they will be sent back across the border in trucks, trains and chain gangs, with modest sample delegations dropped on San Francisco, Portland, New York and Chicago as emissaries of discouragement and the virtues of self-deportation. For you see, while the border influx is a portal of new viruses, the real disease is the vast brown hordes already within. Fortunately," Sheriff JoBob chuckled, "they are easy to identify."

The Sheriff rhapsodized on. "The beauty of this program is that it is scalable. Once we have the infrastructure, we can Hoover up the brown hordes by the millions, send them to the camps, and put them in the disposal pipeline. Many will choose to go back to their shithole countries on their own, and not soon enough. As for you, traitor coyote boy, it's back to the huts and onto the next work detail for you, and not in those suburban duds. It's a pink onesie for you. Soon enough you will be anxious to tell me what I want to know."

Sheriff JoBob tipped a chin at the guards who roughly stood up Kandude. But at that moment, the outside guard popped open the door and said urgently, "Hey Sheriff, check this out."

Sheriff JoBob rose stiffly from his chair and trundled over to the door. Speeding up to the camp gates were three black Lincoln Navigators with smoked glass windows. They came to a stop in front of the gates, the lead vehicle flanked and slightly trailed by the other two. From the lead vehicle stepped a stately woman in high heels and an expensive navy-blue suit. Though elderly, she was still quite beautiful, and in her younger years might have been a model or movie star. She took a few steps forward. Two men in expensive black suits American flag and AR-15 pins in their lapels got out of the car and flanked her a step behind. They wore overly long, wide red ties, sunglasses and earpieces.

The Navigators hummed quietly in the background. Saying nothing, the elegant woman looked at Sheriff JoBob and held her hand palm up toward the gate. After a moment's hesitation, the Sheriff signaled the camp guards to open the gate. The dignified Old Woman strode forward with a slight limp, her escorts maintaining position, heads on swivels.

"Sheriff Crappaggio," she said in a low, melodious voice. It wasn't a question. "Greetings from the highest legitimate authority, and congratulations on your apprehension of that man, who is an enemy of the people," she said, tipping her head slightly toward Kandude, who had been brought out onto the office steps. "Let there be no doubt that in just a few short months there will be commendations and special funding for this model operation, which is being watched closely at the highest levels."

Sheriff JoBob, took a few tentative steps toward the woman. "You are from...?" his voice trailed off. The woman gave an almost imperceptible nod. "We are here to take custody of this man," she said, again indicating Kandude, "as special interest has been taken. Of course, there will be no documentation and no need to speak of this matter until the passage of impending events."

Sheriff JoBob hesitated briefly, but then, grinning, seemed to make up his mind, perhaps pleased to be the subject of notice at the highest levels and the potential recipient of honors and greater power. "Of course, Ma'am," he said, "and rest assured that we stand ready to implement forthcoming border plans with the greatest enthusiasm and efficiency. Please convey our respectful regards."

The camp guards pushed Kandude forward roughly through the gate. Without touching him, the Old Woman's agents escorted Kandude to the lead vehicle, opened the back door, and motioned him to climb into the Escalade. The black vehicles circled around in formation and drove off into the setting sun.

Kandude was thrilled to be out of the immicriminal camp, but apprehensive about this new turn of events. He thanked the Old Woman and began to ask questions. She simply said, "take courage and come with me."



CHAPTER X HOW THE OLD WOMAN EXTRICATED KANDUDE

As they entered the greater Phoenix area, the two support vehicles peeled away, and Kandude's Escalade drove up to the Andalusian Bungalows and Resort of Scottsdale. The Old Woman, walking with that slight limp, led

Kandude to a beautifully appointed bungalow surrounded by gardens of native plants. She told him to clean up and rest overnight. Laid out on the bed were Calvin Klein and Thom Browne apparel in his exact size.

The next morning the Old Woman, now in a Bohemian summer dress, came to Kandude's door and beckoned him to follow. She led him to another nearby bungalow and ushered him in. A woman turned to him from her laptop at the desk and Kandude beheld – oh what surprise – his beloved Cardoshia! They rushed to one another and embraced, blood rushing into their vital organs. Kandude, overwhelmed with joy and shock, asked “My dearest Cardoshia, what are you doing here and how on earth did you find me?”

Cardoshia told him that, as a successful influencer/entrepreneur on OnlyFans and other related platforms, she kept an eye on social media. “I saw viral reports that a Coyote Blanco had been caught bringing illegal immigrants across the border. Shortly afterwards, video clips showed up on TikTok. I recognized you immediately. It didn't take long to track you down at Camp Maytag.”

As it turned out, the Old Woman was a seasoned community theater stage actor who had fallen on hard times. She had been able to make ends meet by conducting a niche coaching practice for retired Elephantian party officials and fundamentalist clergymen who had an affinity for traditional older woman types with strong disciplinary values. Cardoshia and the Old Woman met through online branding seminars and had become close friends.

The Old Woman, having gathered great wisdom and resourcefulness across her long and varied career, had become something of a mentor to Cardoshia. It was she who came up with the plan for deception and extraction of Kandude from Camp Maytag. Fortunately, because of her own talent and hard work, Cardoshia had been highly successful in her online enterprises before a certain setback and was easily able to finance the operation. Though she had quickly made a small fortune on OnlyFans, she was now fleeing California due to an unfortunate business situation.

Cardoshia begged Kandude to share all that had happened since his brutal and unjust eviction from Cha-Ching Manor. Kandude did so, ending with their esteemed Professor B being crushed under the monster truck. Cardoshia shed tears to learn of their ordeal and Professor B's terrible fate. After ordering in a sumptuous brunch, she in turn regaled Kandude with her own journey in the wake of her father's catastrophic business reversals and the evictions from and pillaging of Cha-Ching Manor.

“On the day of our eviction from Cha-Ching Manor, I was packing a few dozen suitcases even though I wasn't sure where I was to go. Father had been carried away by the police. WifeX Tiffany Crystal P-M had decamped with her contingency plan, the modestly well-off but impotent banker. The staff had fled, salaries unpaid, from the band of lawyers and other thugs who were taking over and stripping the premises down to the bones.

A tall repossession agent came into her room and offered to help. “But soon enough, he was trying to help himself to my most intimate and closely guarded charms.” Cardoshia said. “I screamed and resisted, sustaining a cut on my firm but delicate backside when he pushed me against a full-length mirror hard enough to break it. The scar is still quite discernable.”

“Ah! I hope I shall see it,” said honest Kandude.

“I think it likely,” said Cardoshia, “but first let me continue. Just as the agent had penetrated my last defenses and was taking triumphant possessory actions, the Venture Capitalist who had destroyed my father's empire arrived.

Outraged to find the agent encroaching on his assets, he grabbed a vintage brass Stiffel lamp and bashed him over the head.”

“Venture Capitalist Stepford Winbuckawizc, after closely examining me, especially my injured region, to make sure that I was alright, immediately offered me a job as an au pair at his winter home in Newport. I was flown out to the mansion on the beach in his private jet. Soon after liquidating father’s assets, Winbuckawizc arrived at the mansion to instruct me on my childcare duties. Unfortunately, it happened that he was far more interested in my intimate charms than in my childcare skills. But day by day, week by week, I was able to protect both my tenuous refuge at the mansion and my virtue. I was aided in this dilatory strategy by the fact that his three children adored me, and I them.”

Cardoshia continued her story. “Knowing I needed an exit plan, but still without any resources of my own, I gained access to a MacBook Pro. Working late into the night in my private room above the carriage house, I launched my OnlyFans site. Soon I was making major bank using a variety of creative online personae. One night, sensing that VC Winbuckawizc was feverish to consummate a short-term capital gain, I snuck out of the mansion with the MacBook Pro and a change of underwear and Ubered down to Laguna Beach, where an appreciative fan had offered me a place to conduct my business, charging me very favorable rent.

Unfortunately, my erstwhile fan, a man named Bogdan whose last name was never spoken, locked me in a windowless room and forced me to be more aggressive in the scope of my creative content as well as my pricing strategy. He took over the payment transactions and tried to tap into my significant savings, which effort I was able to thwart due to AES-256 encryption and his reluctance to damage the goods. This is about the time you popped up on social media as the mysterious Coyote Blanco. Using private DM with my one true friend, the Old Woman, I was able with her help to escape. We came here to Scottsdale and hatched the plot to extract you from Camp Maytag.”

Kandude was amazed and distressed to learn of Cardoshia’s hardships, but heartened by her significant adaptive skills and their joyous reunion. He thanked her effusively for his rescue and pledged from that moment on to help her in any way possible.

Just as they were finishing their sumptuous brunch and basking in the warmth of felicitous reunion, the door burst open, and a thickset Slavic-looking man with a dense black beard stormed in, in a clear state of agitation. “It’s Bogdan,” cried Cardoshia.

“You little vixen,” Bogdan said to Cardoshia. “You think you can run out on me?” Ignoring the apparent prepster Kandude, he rushed at Cardoshia, grasping her roughly around the neck as she jumped up and tried to escape. Kandude, though by disposition a gentle fellow, sprang up and delivered a crushing blow to Bogdan’s right kidney. As Bogdan arched backward and spun around from the force of the blow, Kandude struck him again, this time in the jaw with a powerful left hook. Bogdan crashed to the floor like a Douglas fir in a Weyerhaeuser plantation. Kandude put a foot on the stunned savage’s throat.

“Don’t kill him!” cried Cardoshia. “Then we will have both the Bulgarians and the law after us. Now what to do? Bogdan has very unpleasant friends, and he is sure to have let them know he has found us.”

“If only Professor B had not been crushed under the monster truck,” said Kandude. “He would give us the best of counsel. But let us ask the Old Woman, for she is certainly very wise.”

The Old Woman appeared at that moment, having heard the ruckus from the garden where she was reading a book of translated poems by Kishwar Naheed. Looking down at the unconscious Bogdan, she said, “this is an unfortunate development, for Bogdan’s Bulgarian friends are a nasty bunch, and surely he is not here alone. They will be on our trail like rabid wolves. Grab the laptop and your toothbrushes and, sorry for the mixed carnivores, let’s exit pursued by a bear.”



CHAPTER XI KANDUDE, CARDOSHIA, AND THE OLD WOMAN ARRIVE IN TUCUMCARI

Within minutes, they were on the road headed East, not stopping except for gas, until they got to a Flying Q truck stop. They noticed “Tucumcari Tonight” billboards and nodded to one another in tacit agreement. Famished, they ate at the 24/7 Truckstop Cafe, where they failed to notice a rather rough looking young couple was checking them out. They topped off their tank and checked in at Chaparral Cock Inn, an old single-story Route 66 motel with doors that faced the parking lot.

On the Old Woman’s advice, the three stayed together in one room for security, with the Escalade backed in for a quick getaway if need be. Exhausted, they fell into a deep sleep, though not without a bit of tossing and turning on Kandude’s part due to concern for Cardoshia’s recent injury.

When they awoke, they found the door slightly ajar. Cardoshia screamed that her laptop was gone, and along with it all access to her ample cryptocurrency accounts.

“Not the Bulgarians, or we would be dead, and you would be on your way back to Laguna Hostage Beach young lady. More likely it’s Truckstop robbers working the strip,” opined the Old Woman.

Sobbing inconsolably, Cardoshia lamented, “Now what are we to do? No crypto, no laptop, no OnlyFans clients providing generous tips for special requests! Once again, we are broke.”

“We’ll sell the Escalade and make our way somehow to Ft. Worth. I have an old lover there who will help us unless his wife spots me,” declared the Old Woman. They returned to the Flying Q, where they saw no one with Cardoshia’s MacBook Pro. Fortunately, they had little trouble finding somebody with a chop shop connection who paid them a very low price for the Escalade since the bank held the title to the vehicle, which had wisely been purchased on credit by Cardoshia’s LLC to take advantage of business tax deductions. The Old Woman seemed to know her way around such things.

A pleasant, plump, androgynous trucker having coffee at the same time as the newly impecunious trio overheard their discussion of Ft. Worth, and said he or she could take them as far as Abilene. Grateful for this sudden break, they thanked the trucker and climbed into the cab, which had two captains’ chairs up front, and a small but comfortable fold up couch/bed in the back.

Once underway, they spoke elliptically about their quandary, reluctant to alarm the friendly trucker with news of their Bulgarian pursuers. Cardoshia again burst into tears and lamented her terrible fortune. “My dear Cardoshia,” said the Old Woman, “In this world of suffering, you have not known anything like the worst of misfortunes. Most whom you meet, including myself, have survived many grave setbacks.”

“What?” cried Cardoshia. “Have you had your family plunged into poverty and despair, had your sumptuous Manor plundered, been penetrated by a repossession agent, kidnapped and used as a digital sex slave, attacked by a mad Bulgarian, and had your hard-earned crypto fortune stolen by highway robbers?”

“My lovely young friend,” said the Old Woman, “if you should prevail upon each person you meet to tell his story, and if there is one of them all that has not cursed his life many a time, or whom has not frequently looked upon himself as the unhappiest of mortals, I give you leave to throw me headforemost onto the highway. Though we

have become close, you really know very little about my life or struggles. If I were to show you my own backside, you would likely withhold your judgment.”

This speech aroused great curiosity in Kandude, Cardoshia, and the friendly trucker.



CHAPTER XII THE HISTORY OF THE OLD WOMAN

“I was born to a family of wealthy coal barons in West Virginia. I had a governess and a pony and was being groomed for child beauty pageants when still a toddler. Then, my parents were killed in a car accident deep in the hills of coal country when their Mercedes Benz S-Class sedan plunged into an abandoned mine shaft. Ironically, that very shaft had been left as an open hazard by their own coal company to avoid wasting money.

“Surviving the wreck by a miracle, I was taken in by a Pentecostal preacher and his wife who lived up a holler in a small shack that had intermittent electricity but no running water.”

“The Preacher took his calling very seriously. His nine natural children and I were schooled on Hell and damnation on a daily basis. Any serious transgressions, such as failing to fully close one’s eyes during prayer, or a momentary delay in passing the red-eye gravy, were met with generous physical punishment. The old man became especially vigorous in his application of the switch to me and my sisters as we got to be around 11 or 12 years of age.”

“We did not see the inside of a school, instead being tutored exclusively from the Scofield Reference Bible and a moldering set of McGuffey Readers from the 1930s. However, we did frequently attend services, occasionally involving snakes, in tents and leaky old churches throughout the county. One Sunday afternoon when I was 13, I was receiving special instructions from the youth minister when he shockingly violated me, calling out to God and speaking in tongues while doing so. When I told my devout stepparents, they called me a liar and a slut and kept me locked up in the root cellar for an entire year, during which the old man would sneak in three or four nights a week to remind me that I had already let myself be defiled by the youth minister. Then they married me off to a 53-year-old sometime mechanic and erratic church elder, who took me even further up the holler.”

“There followed a year as a virtual prisoner of a crude man who took me as he wished and beat me if the scrambled eggs were cold. I avoided pregnancy by a variety of means, aided by the fact that he was plastered on moonshine and limp as a jellyfish much of the time. One day I up and hitched out of the holler with a couple of deer hunters. I made my way to Louisville where I waited tables, babysat, earned my GED, and refined my diction and accent.”

I got to know some actors who were also waiting tables, and they talked me into participating in community theater, for which it turned out I had quite a knack. I was playing Cordelia when a gentleman offered to be my agent and take me to Hollywood. On the way there, my entrepreneurial agent tried to purvey my services to various travelling salesmen and the like, but, thanks to a young Marine corporal who slugged the phony agent in the brisket, I managed to “borrow” his car and make my own way to Hollywood.”

The Old Woman continued her story. “Once in Hollywood, I discovered that various agents and producers were quite anxious to help develop my talent. I soon learned right that preliminary screening auditions usually involved demands for me to demonstrate intimate skills that were not related to my actual potential as an actress. Despite my demurrals, I got a couple of very small parts in forgettable movies. One night, my agent called and said I had been invited to a business meeting with the well-known Garvy Vinstoner at the Peninsula Beverly Hills Hotel. Instead of meeting Mr. Vinstoner at the restaurant however, a polite male assistant drove me out to the Hollywood Burbank Airport, where I was ushered onto a plush private jet along with several other young actresses. Some of them seem very young, even to me. Champagne was abundant. Needless to say, I had never seen such things.”

“We were flown out to a luxurious ranch complex in New Mexico which we were told was the famous Ground Zero Ranch owned by international financier Janus Pedostaino. Upon arrival, I was invited to join Mr. Vinstoner in his suite for a business discussion before the evening’s social event. Once there, I heard a man’s voice summoning me to a massive ensuite whose double door was wide open. There, in a hot tub, lounged a corpulent whale of a man with bad skin and gray stubble. He was drinking champagne, bottles of which stood in ice buckets surrounding the hot tub. He asked me to take off my clothes and join him. I refused and started to back out of the room. He climbed out of the hot tub, angrily demanding that I advance my career by being friendly to him.”

“I ran for the door. He came after me, naked and obviously excited to engage in serious casting negotiations. Though raging, he looked like he was crying. I crashed out of the suite, running down the hall, grabbing at doorknobs to find refuge. One door opened and I careened into another suite, slamming and locking the door behind me. I turned to see a tall man with huge coppery moplike hair looking at me in surprise. He asked if I was okay, and I was relieved to see that he appeared genuinely concerned.”

“The mop-hair man gestured for me to sit down and offered me a glass of Diet Coke. I collapsed with relief, glad to hear no pounding at the door. The mop-hair man asked me what I was doing at the ranch. I explained that I was pursuing an acting career and had happened upon some disconcerting circumstances.”

“In turn, he modestly shared that he was one of the world’s best golfers, that he was a genetically endowed genius, that he owned a great lot of stuff, and that he was worth over a hundred billion dollars. He seemed open, friendly and good-natured. He said that he had many important friends who gathered at the Ground Zero Ranch for pleasant diversions now and again. He shared that he was married to the world’s most beautiful woman, had the world’s sexiest daughter who reminded him of me, and also had two loyal but somewhat obtuse sons.”

“I excused myself to go to the bathroom to regain my composure and splash water on my face. When I emerged, the mop-hair man was standing right in front of the door. He pushed me up against the wall, banging my head against it sharply. It took me a moment to recover my senses, by which time he was grabbing me by that certain private part of my body, probing with short but agile fingers, while trying to kiss me. I put up a furious struggle, but he was large and clearly skilled in this form of engagement. The mop-hair man paused his grabbing for a second and said “I’ll move on you like a bitch. Hah, I love that line. I take what I want in this world. I do it because I can. You must understand how it works. When you’re a star they let you do it. You can do anything.” And he did.

The Old Woman seemed to choke up at the memory, but she took a breath and finished her story.

“At one moment during this grotesque assault, I pretended for a moment to yield, and when he eased back a little, I violently twisted my way free. I ran through the open doors to the second-floor balcony. Seeing that the swimming pool was directly below, I vaulted the railing and jumped. Unfortunately, I was just a little short and I ripped a significant chunk out of one buttock on the coping of the pool as I plunged in. I was rushed to the hospital in Albuquerque where they patched me up, but I was forever disqualified from an acting career too most often dependent upon unblemished pulchritude.”

Kandude, Cardoshia, and the friendly trucker all expressed their horror and dismay at the abuse the Old Woman had experienced at the hands of men at every turn. But she deprecated. “I resolved never to be abused again,” she said. “I got work in restaurants, banks, casinos, and bail bondsmen offices. I went back to small community theater to do as much of what of what I loved as I could. I earned a black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I had

relationships with men on my own terms. I will never submit to the Bulgarians, nor will I ever allow a bunch of pious old white men to dictate the terms of my life.”

“Ironically,” she concluded, “the tall mop-hair man won the most country club golfing titles in history and became one of the most powerful individuals in the world. And despite his history as an adulterous rapist, his friends, supporters and promoters, including many women, revere him as a god.”



CHAPTER XIII THE FUGITIVES LEARN ABOUT GUN RIGHTS AT FREEMEN RANCH

As the rig drew within an hour or two of Abilene, the friendly trucker said that he or she had to make a delivery at the nearby Freeman Ranch first. They got off on a winding two-lane road, reached a turnoff marked by a handmade sign with a drawing of the OK hand gesture, and followed a meandering dirt road. They drove up over a little rise to a sprawling, weatherbeaten complex with a ranch house, a mammoth pole barn and several outbuildings. As they approached, they could see that the isolated property was surrounded by a tall, barbed wire fence topped by spiral razor wire. The top of the gates had a wrought iron sign with the words "Freemen Ranch," under which were welded two oversized replicas of revolutionary war muskets crossed one over the other.

Two huge American flags and a coiled snake flag flew from wooden poles in the yard. Heavily armed men on four wheelers guarded the gates. One of them approached, and the friendly trucker showed him the delivery order. The deeply tanned outdoorsman squinted at the friendly trucker but ordered the gates open and waved them in, stopping them just far enough in to secure the gates. The four travelers climbed out of the truck. Kandude noticed that a variety of mostly beat up pickup trucks with expired Idaho, Nevada, and Utah tags were parked around the yard.

A burly middle-aged man with a full beard, wearing a brown cowboy hat and a plaid shirt, came out of the ranch house and strode toward the group. He was wearing two 1911 .45 ACPs holstered in a tooled leather gunfighter rig. "I think I see what that is," he said, gesturing at the friendly trucker, "but may I ask what you others are doing here?" Turning to Cardoshia, pupils dilating, he continued, "And I must say, you are most certainly not unwelcome." He looked at the Old Woman with some interest but cocked his head slightly at the appearance of the apparent prepster, Kandude. They replied that they were headed for Ft. Worth. He ordered his men to have the truck driver unload the delivery at the doors to the barn and get back to California as quickly as possible. "Don't worry about these three," he told the trucker. "They are now my guests."

"My name is Kannon," said the man. "As you are just in time for a BBQ, I would like to invite you to my home for dinner."

Nonplussed, and a bit concerned, they followed him up onto the porch and into the house. The double front doors had old western Colt .45 six-shooters for door handles. They entered a large great room with a stone fireplace and a ranch table in the middle of the floor underneath a wagon wheel chandelier. Kannon summoned a young Hispanic woman he called Maria and asked her politely to set out the barbecue for his 3 guests and the Ranch Foreman, Ruger. Though she studiously kept her eyes down, Maria looked vaguely familiar to Kandude.

Kandude, Cardoshia, and the Old Woman introduced themselves and looked around the place. It was somewhat shabby but clean. There were guns mounted above the fireplace, the side tables, the sofas and chairs, the doors, and over the windows.

Kandude noticed a heavily loaded bookshelf near the fireplace. Walking over, he saw two old Bibles beside three brand new God Bless the USA Bibles. He glanced across the spines of the other books, and didn't recognize any of the titles, which included *The Turner Diaries*, *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*, *Hold Back This Day*, *The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem*, and *The Doctrine of the Lesser Magistrates* among others.

“So, you are a reader, then,” said Kannon to Kandude. “I do my best, Mr. Kannon” answered Kandude. “I was taught by my preceptor, Professor B, may he rest in peace, that one should read widely and deeply to become a good man, a good citizen, and a good capitalist. But I confess ignorance of all that I see here, save for, of course, the Bible.”

“Just call me Kannon, or if you wish, Squire K. We no longer use last names, as this enables the DEPEGUV to subjugate free men. It sounds like your professor was indeed a wise man,” said Kannon. “The key, however, is to read the right books. We will talk more soon.”

Maria and a couple of other Hispanic women brought in generous platters of BBQ ribs and sausages, potato salad, grilled vegetables, coleslaw, and garlic bread. Removing his gun belt and putting it on a custom maple stand at arm’s length behind him, Squire K sat at the head of the table, placing Cardoshia on his right and the Old Woman on his left, leaving Kandude and the silent, hawk-eyed Ruger to complete the table.

The food was superb. Squire K asked his guests about their backgrounds and plans, but most of his attention was devoted to Cardoshia, with whom he appeared quite smitten. The three guests provided polite but superficial backstories, leaving out their many recent travails, especially with regard to the Bulgarians. Eventually, the table was cleared, with a promise of apple pie a la mode to follow.

“Our thanks for such a lovely meal,” said the Old Woman in her melodious voice. “You do know how to make weary travelers feel welcome.” Squire K tipped his head and smiled warmly, just like a country squire. It seemed like an opening for more serious conversation.

“Your ranch seems quite heavily fortified,” ventured Kandude carefully. “Are you and your family in some sort of danger?”

Squire K looked Kandude in the eye and took a breath, steeping his hands on the table. “Are we in danger, you ask, young Kandude. We are in mortal danger indeed, as a family, as a ranch, as a race, as Christians, and as a nation. Our defenses here are necessary because we are in a state of siege, a state which we have already resisted far more successfully than most.”

“There are threats all around us. Immigrants, drug addicts, college professors, Black Lives Matter terrorists, abortionists, rapists, school librarians, homosexuals, and atheists, among others. I have personally seen that hospitals are kidnapping and killing children or turning them over to gay couples to be abused. I’ve learned since that schools are secretly providing children with “gender-affirming” surgeries. But these are just the symptoms of a grave constitutional disease. The real threat comes from that vast malignant entity that sends jackbooted thugs, the black helicopters, tailpipe emissions testers, and revenuers. That is, the federal government. He named this last with acid scorn.”

Squire K was becoming more animated, his steeped fingers now converted to finger guns. “But we have taken a stand. And we are many. We are the sovereign owners of the land and all of its fruits. We have the sole God-given authority over the laws, the values, and the standards of this White Christian nation.”

“We will no longer submit to the tyrant. We will pay taxes no longer. We will pay no grazing fees nor get EINs. We will not apply for drivers’ licenses which are the modern concentration camp tattoos portrayed in stories of a Holocaust that never happened. As William Potter Gale is our witness, we will no longer pull over for state troopers nor submit to false subpoenas or court orders that are inherently null and void. The storm is here.”

Squire K stood, turned, took his gun belt and .45 ACPs from the maple stand and placed them firmly on a side table. He removed the ACPs from their holsters, released the magazines, locked the slides back, and checked the chambers. Moving over to the dining table he carefully put them, safely pointed down the centerline, on his cowhide placemat. He laid his hands on them like a priest handling the chalice and paten during the Eucharist. "And these," he said, "are the sacred instruments of restoration."

The Squire took a breath. "The right to keep and bear arms is the bedrock of our constitution. No guns - no free speech. No guns - no property rights. No guns - no protection from false authority. No guns - no safety for our wives and our children. No guns - no America."

His voice lowered to a hoarse whisper. "These are not just finely tooled implements of exquisite precision and power. They are strength; they are freedom; they are the anti-venoms of tyranny. They are the hallowed implements of White Christian manhood. A male child's first gift should be a freedom rifle, which they needs must learn to use from the cradle."

Flecks of saliva had formed on the Squire's lips. "Free men have arms; slaves do not." He raised his ACPs toward the ceiling. "These," he pronounced, "are the Guns of God."

After a reverent pause, the Squire turned to the side table and adroitly reloaded and replaced his guns in the holsters, then carefully returned the gun belt to the custom maple stand. He sat down, breathing a bit heavily. The three guests, relieved to see the ACPs put by, held their breath.

"Now let's have some apple pie!" said the Squire. And so they did.

At postprandial coffee, the Squire turned again to his guests. "My new friends, you too can be part of our righteous movement. You", he said to the Old Woman, "are clearly a woman of culture who could be an elder guide to our modest young women. "You," he said to Kandude, "except for your preppie duds, seem like a likely foot soldier in the White Christian army." Kandude stifled an alarmed gulp at this now familiar invitation. "And lovely Cardoshia, you could be the revered Queen of a Freeman ranch, and the honored mother of many White Christian sons."

When the dishes were cleared, Squire K said, "Honored guests, I wish to show you something. Please join me on a tour."

He led them outside into the deepening dusk and to the mammoth pole barn. Armed guards slid the giant doors apart and they walked into a cavernous, brightly lit space. Flags and patriotic banners adorned the walls. A huge banner of the familiar flying superhero with the strange feathery orange headdress hung from trusses overhead.

The smell of solvent and gun oil filled the air. Large numbers of crates with military markings were stacked high around the great space, along with what appeared to be vast quantities of survival supplies. There were two Jeeps outfitted with .50 caliber machine guns. A small canon that Kandude thought might be called a howitzer was emblazoned with the words "right to keep and bear arms." A big crate just inside the door, perhaps from today's delivery, had 'FGM-148' stenciled on it. Armorers' tables lined much of the perimeter, covered with guns, belt ammo loaders, tools and laptops. Men were working diligently at some of the tables. A command center with numerous computer screens and CCTV monitors was situated in the middle of the room.

"Welcome," said Squire K, "to the People's Rights Armory. Our day is coming soon, and readiness is all. There is a Freeman Army 30,000 strong standing back and standing by. A single code word on Telegram will quicken the Day of Retribution. And 30,000 will become 300,000. 300,000 will become 3 million".

“You may recall that our President for Life has said there will be a bloodbath if another election is stolen by Antifa and the pestilential legion of lefties. Make no mistake. Our President for Life TvP” - here the Squire raised his eyes to the superhero banner - “wasn’t just predicting it; he was commanding it. And he so loves us that he is willing to give his life for us. And we for him.”

Kandude felt numb at this martial spectacle. Unable to stop himself, he asked, “But Squire, does this mean you will be shooting officers of the law, elected officials and our fellow citizens?” Squire K wheeled on Kandude, nostrils flaring. “You mean fighting the minions and dupes of the tyrant for our very lives and freedom? Let me say this, naive young Kandude: some folks need killing! It’s a matter of necessity.” He glared at Kandude, but before he could say anything more, one of the heavily armed men looked up from a monitor and said “Squire, there is a large BMW SUV approaching the compound. Two clicks out and moving fast.”

Cardoshia and the Old Woman looked at each other. “The Bulgarians,” said Cardoshia fearfully. Squire K looked at the two ladies quizzically. Without turning back to look at Kandude, he said, “Young Kandude, you go back to the house and start reading something from my library. We need to sort things out here.” He turned to study the CCTV monitors at the command center.

Kandude turned reluctantly to walk out of the barn. Bemused and alarmed, Cardoshia squeezed his arm and put a small card-like object into his hand, which he stealthily stuck in his pocket.

The Old Woman spoke sotto voce to Cardoshia with all the prudence that age and experience gave. “Young Kandude is in trouble with the Squire, I fear. In the meantime, you must survive the Bulgarians, who will never stop. Squire K is clearly intoxicated with you. Now is the time to employ your womanly wiles in a pragmatic choice, a choice of the kind a woman makes that exercises power, but makes the man believe he rules. Squire K can protect you from the Bulgarians, and thus you may be able to protect Kandude from him. Imply everything but give nothing.”

In the meantime, Kandude climbed the front porch and went into the house. There, Maria beckoned to him urgently from the shadows. “Señor Kandude, you do not recognize me, but you saved my child in the desert not long ago.”

“What are you doing here, Miss Maria?” asked Kandude in great surprise. “And it’s just Kandude.”

“There is no time for my story, good Kandude. But Señor Ruger has come into the house through the side door and is looking for you. This is a very bad thing. You must make a run for it!”

She pulled him along through the kitchen to a back door, pointing out a Dodge Ram pickup. “The keys are in it,” she said, “and there is a back road out between that stand of trees. She pointed and gave him a little push. “¡Vaya con Dios!”

At that moment, there was a furious eruption of gunfire out near the front gate. Kandude ran to the pickup, fired it up, and sped out into the dark on a winding dirt road.

Minutes earlier, the BMW X7 had pulled up to within 50 feet of the front gate of Freeman Ranch, high beams illuminating the patriotic portal. After a couple of silent minutes, six men wearing black track suits stepped out of the SUV, carrying H&K MP5 machine pistols.

“You in farm,” shouted one of the men in a thick eastern European accent. “We come for our property, the highly profitable online sex-goddess Ms. Cardoshia. Send her out to us and no one get hurt.”

Squire K stepped out from the barn to look at the Bulgarians. He smiled thinly and gave a brief nod to a lieutenant. Floodlights lit up the foreign gangsters, and a massive fusillade from dozens of weapons instantly annihilated the Bulgarians and their SUV.

Squire K nodded in satisfaction. "Better get the D9," he said to one of the Freemen.



CHAPTER XIV THE ACCIDENTAL ARRIVAL OF KANDUDE IN CHANGRILALAND

Knowing that the Freemen would be hot on his trail, Kandude kept the pedal to the metal as he put distance between himself and the ranch. He knew also that he had to get rid of the truck PDQ.

After he picked up the Interstate headed East, he soon saw the familiar and welcome sign of the Flying Q truck stop. He pulled in to lose himself and the truck in the crowded parking lot. Suddenly, he saw a familiar big rig. Sure enough, when he walked, cautious and alert, into the café, he and the friendly truck driver spotted each other right way. He or she rushed up and gave him a warm hug. "I have been so worried about you and the ladies," he or she said. "I myself was glad to make it out of there alive. Come tell me what happened."

Kandude related all that had happened, including the shootout as he was making his escape. He expressed grave concern for the safety of his beloved Cardoshia and the Old Woman. The friendly trucker, who revealed that his or her name was or was not Briar, expressed grave concern as well, and wondered if they should call the police. Kandude thought about the People's Rights Armory. "I think not," he said. "That could start a war and make our fair ladies' situation all the more perilous. This new disaster truly makes me wonder about my dear Professor B's axiom that all is for the best in this best of all possible capitalistic worlds."

"I will say this," opined Briar, "The Old Woman seems wise and resourceful, and Cardoshia is infinitely charming. I am guessing they will find their way until you can come up with a plan."

After a sober interval of silence, Briar said, "I have my new dispatch. After dropping this load in Abilene, I pick up another at the distribution center in Dallas-Ft. Worth for home goods which I must deliver to Seattle. This is, I admit, a detour from your objects, but it will buy some time for things to cool down, to ponder strategy, and get to a safer part of the country. The Freemen are surely out looking for you this very minute."

Kandude's only impressions of Seattle, besides the Space Needle, were that it was loaded with ultraliberals who perpetually quaffed elaborate coffee drinks, worshipped Kurt Cobain, and wanted to defund the police.

"Listen, Kandude," said Briar, "you seem capable and well-travelled – is there any chance you can drive an 18-wheeler?" Kandude allowed that he could, thanks to the Boyzenberries.

"Let's make the run together – I will split the mileage with you," said Briar. "We won't get rich, but will have a decent payday and make our way to a city with fewer guns per capita. I have friends there."

Lacking a better option and appreciating Briar's kindness, Kandude agreed. They made the run through Dallas and to Seattle in good time. At one point, Kandude put his hand in his pocket and discovered the forgotten object given to him by his beloved Cardoshia. It was a 3"x4" color headshot of her looking exceedingly fetching. It instantly became his most cherished possession of all time.

After dropping their load in the industrial district, Briar parked his truck in a commercial lot, and they caught an Uber to his friend's place in an old neighborhood North of downtown.

Briar and Kandude arrived at a modest craftsman home on a tree-lined street. They went into the house without knocking. Briar was greeted warmly by an eclectic group of a half dozen people including Briar's special friend Daphne. Kandude was made welcome by the group. It being a Saturday afternoon, they drank wine and lemonade on a brick patio under a honeysuckle-wrapped trellis. All took an interest in Kandude and his journey, but none pressed for details once sensing his discretion.

Later in the afternoon, Daphne said she had a good lawyer friend who had a large boat at a nearby marina, and she had an open invitation to use it. Briar and another friend were enthusiastic about a sunset cruise, and Kandude, having boated Lake Michigan over the summers on one of P-M's luxury yachts, agreed to join them, distracted though he was by the plight of Cardoshia and the Old Woman.

The Minnow Too turned out to be a sleek and luxurious 40-foot powerboat. The lawyer, referred to as The Skipper when in nautical endeavor, was on board with a couple of other friends, one of whom was an extremely large, affable man who appeared to be some Polynesian type. He had elaborate curlicue tattoos on his face. The other was a slight man with thick glasses and a gray fringe of hair who looked like a rabbi. The Skipper and his companions were delighted to see Daphne and her friends. He offered them cocktails, and as the afternoon was waning, proposed they take a sunset cruise in Puget Sound.

The evening began in spectacular fashion, as they powered at high speed toward the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Suddenly, the sky grew dark. Out of nowhere, a violent storm beset the Minnow Too with howling fury. Sheets of horizontal rain erased any sense of the horizon, and monster waves heaved them about like a peanut shell in a savage cauldron. They were swept far along in directions impossible to discern for a length of time they could not measure. The Skipper, a capable boater, did the best anyone could, but the boat was struck by a rogue wave and capsized. Kandude and the Polynesian fellow grabbed opposite handles of a huge cooler as they desperately thrashed about in the ocean looking for their companions, but to no avail. They struggled to stay afloat in the boiling seas for hours. Finally, they were cast roughly up on a rocky shore in the dead of night. They dragged the cooler and each other up to the tree line where they collapsed in pain and exhaustion.

When they came to their senses in the morning, the weather was serene. Sheer cliffs and the rocky shore surrounded the tiny crescent beach, cut only by a narrow ravine. They looked at one another, and having no other choice, began clawing their way up the steep crevice.

"You are a strong swimmer, sir," said Kandude. "I thank you for saving my life. My name is Kandude." "I am Tanemahuta," said the powerful man. "And though we Māori are excellent watermen, I believe it was you who saved my life." Both men concluded that their companions were almost certainly lost.

The men exchanged brief stories as they clawed their way up the steep ravine. Kandude learned that Tanemahuta had been variously engaged as a sheep farmer, seaman, rodeo champion, postal worker, farrier, and a councilman on the South Island of his native New Zealand. He spoke several languages and was currently in Seattle on an international mid-career exchange program. The Skipper, whom they feared certainly drowned, had been his sponsor.

The men climbed for hours, sustained only by the rivulet that drained the ravine, until they reached an opening that revealed a narrow valley of manicured fields surrounded by steep cliffs in all directions.

On the cliffs above, they saw large numbers of windmills and solar panels. The many waterfalls and streams had numerous small waterwheels. There lay a finely groomed gravel road, which they followed through diverse crop fields until they arrived at a village composed of modest but finely built wooden homes, all exquisitely neat and beautifully landscaped. They noticed that all the structures had large nets suspended high above them, as if to protect them from some threat above.

As they walked further into town, they happened upon a system of pedestrian conveyors, which swiftly transported people in all directions. They passed a school yard, where modestly but neatly dressed children of diverse heritage were playing spiritedly together. As they watched, a dignified, smiling woman, perhaps the

principal, clapped and summoned the young ones to tables under a pergola. The long tables were filled with a variety of fruits, vegetables and many other excellent-looking dishes, not including hot dogs or French fries. The children lined up in a courteous and orderly fashion and marched in for their midday fare.

Shortly, a courteous passerby greeted them. He noted they appeared to have had some difficulty and escorted them quickly via the conveyers to a clean, modern medical facility that also contained a large women's clinic. Friendly, capable doctors and nurses patched them up and gave them wraps and salves for their assorted abrasions and contusions. When Kandude and Tanemahuta, begging forgiveness, offered to pay as soon as they could do so, the amused staff waved them off, advising them that health care, a basic human right, was free here in Changrilalaland. They directed the men to a nearby roadhouse, which recommendation was most welcome as the shipwrecked men were famished.

The roadhouse offered fresh local farm-to-table fare in great variety. When payment was again embarrassingly broached, the restaurateurs laughed. "Gentlemen, it is plain that you are strangers," said the manager. "You doubtless have not the coin of the country, but it is not necessary to have money at all to dine in this house. All hostelries established for the convenience of commerce are paid for by the government of Changrilalaland."

Kandude and Tanemahuta were amazed by all they saw and experienced. They expressed great curiosity about the nature of the Changrilalaland, which clearly was not a jurisdiction of America. They asked the roadhouse manager how they could learn more about the country. "I am but a humble restaurateur, gentlemen," she said, "but there is a retired councilman who is most learned in all things related to our history and government."



CHAPTER XV WHAT KANDUDE AND TANEMAHUTA LEARN ABOUT CHANGRILALAND

Given directions, Kandude and Tanemahuta called upon the old councilman, into whose modest but beautifully appointed home they were warmly received. The Councilman said that he was 98 years old and had served in the government of Changrilaland for over 70 years. He was glad to share some background.

“This tiny country we inhabit was founded over 350 years ago by a community of freethinkers fleeing religious, racial, and social persecution by the colonial and theocratic powers of the Old World. Their ship was wrecked on the same rocky shores of your perilous arrival. They were aided by the Salish Peoples, some of whom joined the establishment of this tiny community and helped keep it hidden from the rest of the world. Our isolation has been assured thus far in that those born here typically have no desire to leave, and those few who happen upon this place, and who may augment our genetic diversity, almost invariably decide to stay.”

“You two are most welcome if you are honest, civil, and willing to work for the good of the community in some area of your ability. You would, if polite and respectful of women and considered by one or more to be suitable, be welcome to reproduce if so inclined, but hopefully in numbers in keeping with the voluntary recommendations of our Ministry of Sustainability.”

“We are honored by your invitation,” said Kandude. “But how do you remain undiscovered in these times of satellites, electronics, and real estate developers? And how did you develop the modern technologies we have seen in your village?”

“Ah,” said the Councilman. “Our village lies at the bottom of this narrow chasm on a small but mountainous island whose rocky shores and vertiginous cliffs discourage exploration. Yet we do, indeed, live in constant fear, these last several decades, of discovery by geographers, extreme adventure vacationists, CIA analysts, and amateur users of Google Earth.”

“As for technology, despite our extreme self-sufficiency and robust indigenous invention, we have long had a special cadre of secret agents who travel incognito to the outside world to import knowledge and things of sustainable and salubrious value, while avoiding things not aligned with our collective values. Thus, we have hydro and solar electric resources, but no internal combustion engines. We have bows and arrows, but no guns. We have computers, but except for our small intelligence service, no connection to the internet nor to social media. We have educational DVDs, but no video games. We have medical technology and expertise, but no liposuction. We have books and newspapers, but no television. To those well-meaning folks who, using the right of free speech that we deeply cherish, suggest we might pipe in selected media, we give them access to Faux News and The Bachelorette in a secure facility. They swiftly retract their proposals and welcome immediate treatment for PTSD. Of course, we do regret missing Masterpiece Theater.”

Tanemahuta offered that he now understood the significance of the vast web of nets overhanging the features of human habitation and expressed great admiration at their success avoiding invasion by predatory states for over three centuries. The accidental travelers asked many questions about art, culture and governance. Kandude, reflecting on the vigorous advocacy for Christian theocracy back home, asked if religion was practiced in Changrilaland.

The Councilman reddened a bit. “We are most circumspect about the labels of religion here, young Kandude. Our citizens practice whatever spiritual philosophy and celebrations of meaning suit them, as long as it imposes no beliefs or practices on others, nor does any harm to the common good. For the most part, our citizens find

spiritual meaning and fulfillment in interacting with nature, cultivating the earth, and harvesting from the sea, and even more so by doing good for one another. On the day of observance, which many celebrate on a particular day, but which may be held as people wish or not at all, you might see people gather for a hike into the forest and enjoying pleasant meals together, during which time is taken to reflect together on nature's bounty, the beauty of art and science, and the frail but improvable nature of the human spirit."

Kandude marveled at the notion that there were here no antagonistic religious sects invoking the absolute certitude of their particular doctrines and authorities, demanding the enforcement of one over the other, and desiring to ban each other's beliefs, books and practices in the name of God. He reflected that, contrary to the demands of certain contemporary factions in his own country, such tolerance and respect seemed to have been the actual intention of the founders of his own America.

Confessing that he had once been a councilman in his own country, Tanemahuta asked what form of government prevailed in Changrilalaland.

"Ah," said the Councilman. "Firstly, our people are by nature and upbringing are inclined to choose leaders who manifest erudition, wisdom, honesty and humanity. Those elected leaders are thereby able to exercise inherent authority granted by the people, and they govern by respect and through consideration of our rules of law. These laws are vibrant, adaptive, and conscientiously fulfilled in consideration of first principles of human rights and the common good. They are honored and applied in trust by women and men who are above self-interest, pursuit of factional power, dogma, and exorbitant gifts such luxury RVs, vacations on opulent yachts, and travel on private jets for expensive fishing excursions. None of them are prey to the absurd fallacy of jurisprudence that pretends the law must be governed by procrustean documents fixed in amber and inferred from the presumed intentions of long-dead progenitors solely as understood by an exclusive priesthood of reactionary zealots who belong to the Theofederalist Society."

"The laws and regulations are curated and administered by experts in their various fields, whose dedication and specialized knowledge is honored and appreciated by the people. We have elections and referenda by acclamation, or more formal means as needed. Consensus typically arises in large part before voting day by respectful and deep conversation across all schools of thought. Ours is an organic democracy, which we are not unaware is in some part a luxury of our modest population."

"No one who divides people into loyalists or enemies of the state, or advocates the inferiority of certain classes, or dishonors truth in the face of science, facts or reason, or insults and denigrates others, or foments fear, anger and hatred, can ever hope to win a place of responsibility and respect in Changrilalaland."

Kandude exclaimed, "Dear sir, you must have only people of extraordinary virtue and intelligence in Changrilalaland!"

"Alas, no," said the Councilman. "Here we have human beings, which means we also have the petty, the dishonest, the belligerent, the narcissistic, and the occasional criminal. But we have a deep culture of love, learning, respect, and common cause, and this inculcates a fundamental belief in human decency and mutual support that has proven both resilient and durable."

"The ironic fact of human nature is that most people, though flawed, actually want to be good and decent. But the believers of dogma, marketers who strip both products and exemplars of any values other than generation of revenue and achievement of celebrity, and seekers of power, superiority, self-aggrandizement, and acquisition of material advantage divorced from social good, tend to lead others into noxious ideologies, antisocial lifestyles,

unalloyed materialism, conflict and corruption. Poverty and ignorance likewise contribute to social decay; we fight both with all our might. The decency of the leaders cultivates the decency of the people and vice versa. Equity and fairness, and the help of each for all, promote the decency of the people and vice versa.”

“If only my beloved Professor B, that most excellent philosopher, were here to explore the merits of your system, dear learned sir,” proclaimed Kandude, “for though he studied both the arts and humanities, he was nonetheless quite certain that it was not the cultivation of basic human decency but rather seeking maximum profit that was all the for the best in this best of all possible capitalistic worlds.”

“Ah yes. Capitalism,” pronounced the Councilman. “The human impulse to pursue enterprise and grow wealth is a powerful and inherent good, as it effectuates hard work, productivity, and human progress. This impulse should be cultivated, harnessed, and rewarded. Here in Changrilalaland, we encourage endeavors that yield a surplus of goods, provide a generosity of services, and grow individual wealth.”

“Wealth is the product of man’s capacity to think and to work. But alas, it can also be the product of deceit and theft as well as exploitation of the weak, the ignorant, and the desperate. It can be the product of explicit larceny, or worse, of elaborate transactions and schemes that contribute nothing to the common good but instead siphon resources from beneficial enterprise. It can be hoarded away in vast amounts that cannot possibly be needed or used by any man or woman but is yet removed from any prudent reserve or productive activity. It can be used to greatly amplify the effective suffrage of the rich over the vote of the rest through the purchase of power and influence. This last is bribery and corruption however named.”

“The moral hazard of unbridled capitalism” the Councilman went on, “lies in the transubstantiation of profit and the accumulation of money into a superordinate end rather than a servient engine of social good. Pure capitalism is both the mother and child of greed and the will to status and power, unmoored from the anchorage of human dignity. Sanctification of profit, and the cynical belief that it must be honored as the supreme dynamo of human endeavor, is as fundamentally primitive a notion as the idea that those with the most and biggest weapons should rule the world. The supremacy of capitalism is not a fact of the human condition, but a value taught by specific cultures, championed by the plutocracy, and fueled by scarcity, fear, greed, and ego.

The Councilman reflected for a moment, and then continued. “Here in Changrilalaland, you will find no factory owner who makes 100 times as much as their workers. You will find no business leader or teacher proclaiming greed is good. Here you will find no one proselytizing trickle-down economics, a malignant and disproven fiction created to justify the extreme accumulation and deferential treatment of the rich and to mollify the festering aspirations of the poor. Here you will find some people who are wealthier than others, but you will not find the wealthy fighting and evading taxes tooth and claw, or resisting and circumventing social and environmental regulations that might reduce their profits regardless of the cost to people and the planet. Here we neither prohibit nor disparage inequality, except in matters of human rights, human dignity, and application of the law. But we do teach that social and economic inequalities are only to be allowed, to the extent possible, if the worst off will be better off than they might be under an equal distribution.”

Kandude and Tanemahuta were somewhat overwhelmed by this philosophical discussion. Kandude could not help wondering whether the late Professor B would regard the whole as communist drivel and mount a learned rebuttal, or would instead be inspired to reconsider his convictions. Kandude himself found the culture and values of Changrilalaland most compelling. He resolved to give these matters much thought when he was less exhausted, broke, and bereft of his beloved Cardoshia.

The Councilman's assistant brought Kandude and Tanemahuta to a modest but comfortable guest house to refresh themselves, after which they shared a lovely dinner on the deck with the Councilman, his wife and their sustainable family unit of two daughters, two sons-in-law and two grandchildren. They remained as guests for a week, exploring Changrilalaland and learning for themselves that things appeared much as had been portrayed by the Councilman. They saw no homeless people, nor did they see anyone carrying weapons. They saw no bullying. They spontaneously joined various work details and their contributions were much appreciated. The time was filled with courtesy, hospitality, and good cheer.

At the end of the week, Kandude spoke to his good companion. "Tanemahuta, my friend, while it appears that we have landed in an ideal country, I fear that I must return to find and rescue Cardoshia if it is within my power. I understand you may want to forge your destiny here, and I will always be grateful to you for saving my life and giving me your friendship."

"This is a most agreeable country indeed," said Tanemahuta, "but I too have left behind interests in the outside world. Moreover, you have also saved my life, and I would like to stay by your side for a possibly precarious journey to your increasingly dangerous country."

It is the case that mankind are so fond of roving, of securing a place in their own country, of pursuing loves that may be impossible to consummate, of boasting of their travels, that these two happy men resolved to be no longer so and to ask permission of the First Governor to take their leave.

The First Governor opined that the two friends might be a bit foolish but affirmed that she had no right to detain them, asserting that all persons are free. She told them that their passage to the outside world would be by means that protected the seclusion of Changrilalaland and requested their solemn oath to speak of it never. This oath they gladly gave, such was their regard for the genius of the country's propitious isolation, the brilliance of its culture, and the generosity and goodness of its people.

Before they left, the Councilman gave them the parting gift of a handheld electronic device. "This, gentlemen, is an electronic debit device, into whose account I have deposited the modest sum of 100 units of Changrilalaland's currency, the minerva, which you will find instantly convertible to the currency of any country on the planet."

Kandude and Tanemahuta warmly thanked the Councilman, his family, and other villagers who gathered to see them off for their kindness and wisdom as well as the extraordinary parting gift of funds for their journey. Then they were gently blindfolded, sedated, and taken forth by an escort of five women and five men. When they awoke, they found themselves on a park bench in Seattle, each with small natural fiber backpacks containing clothing and items of convenience and the electronic debit device safely secured in a concealed belt on Kandude's person.



CHAPTER XVI KANDUDE AND TANEMAHUTA GO BACK TO AMERICA

Kandude and Tanemahuta got themselves oriented and decided to go to a nearby café for breakfast. While waiting for veggie scrambles, they took a look at the debit device, which was accessible to each of them using a combination of biometrics. Scrolling through, they were stunned to discover that 100 minervas was worth more than a million dollars. Reeling from their sudden wealth, they agreed that never had they heard of such generosity. They reflected that for a single individual in America to suddenly score such unearned fortune required millions to spend hard-earned dollars that might have been used for food and medicine for their children on lottery tickets.

The device hooked up wirelessly to the café cash register and they were on their way lickety-split. But to where? Kandude resolved to head to Texas to find Cardoshia to rescue her from her predicament, even though he knew he would himself be in great peril from Squire K and his army. Without hesitation, Tanemahuta swore to stick by Kandude in this perilous quest, noting that their sudden resources would no doubt enlarge their possibilities.

The two friends found their way to a used car lot and bought a Subaru Forester. The salesman, noting that they expressed no resistance to the listed price, added numerous markups to cover state, local, neighborhood and city block taxes, dealer administration, special undercoating developed by NASA for space vehicle atmospheric reentry, dealer administration of dealer administrative costs, key delivery for each of two keys, transport from the parking lot to the office located 50 feet away, and other miscellaneous charges. Thus, they took possession of the stickered \$12,000 car for a mere \$27,642.99. Kandude and Tanemahuta were a bit taken aback by the out-the-door price, but neither had ever purchased a vehicle in America, and the salesman was extremely friendly and seemed to know exactly what he was doing.

The duo, relying on Kandude's prior travel experience, resolved to go from one Flying Q truck stop to another to accomplish the swiftest transit to Texas and his beloved Cardoshia. They stopped for supper in Idaho, tired but confident that a modest motel would, as always, be found nearby. As they were considering the meatloaf special, they noticed a sad looking man sitting at a nearby table who appeared to be in his early 40s. He was shutting down his smartphone as a tear rolled down his cheek. The small, dark-complexioned fellow had horn rim glasses and wore a tweed sport coat, button down oxford shirt, corduroys, and suede shoes, all neat and clean but more than a bit worn. He had only a cup of coffee in front of him.

"Sir, have you some trouble?" asked Kandude, concerned. The man quickly brushed away the tear and, in a melodious foreign accent, quietly assured them that all was well, except that his 1986 Toyota Corolla with 437,000 miles on it had broken down in the parking lot, the offer arising from his 600th job application had just been rescinded, and that he was basically broke and stranded at the Flying Q in the middle of Idaho. Kandude and Tanemahuta immediately invited him to join them for dinner and take a brief respite from his tribulations.

The man said that his name was Morton. He was a Doctor of Philosophy in philosophy, who had taught college for many years. Failing to land a tenure track position, he had wandered the country taking whatever temporary teaching appointments he could get. His trajectory gradually descended from prestigious private and major state universities to middle and lower tier state and local colleges, and finally to junior colleges in obscure rural locales. This last turndown was for a position to teach 13 courses in a single year for \$14,500, or roughly \$3.65/hour, at the Kawpowkee Springs Community College and EPA Superfund Site in Florida. The problem was apparently that his specialty was Critical Space Theory, which concerns itself with the relationship between geography and socioeconomic conditions.

“Indeed,” said Morton, “my dissertation was constructed on the fact that Swedish mothers enjoy full reproductive rights as well as childbirth and postnatal care at no cost, along with lengthy maternity leave that can be shared with the other parent. Meanwhile, in Appalachia, criminal reproductive restrictions, limited health care access, higher childbirth and infant mortality rates, and significant maternal poverty are considered the necessary features of a moral society and the free enterprise system. Of course, my research showed that both communities passionately love both mothers and children. However, the newly disinfected KSCCEPA Board of Trustees, consisting of an outboard motor mechanic, a pesticide applicator, the local chapter president of Mothers for Purity, and the married co-owners of a small portable toilet company, all of whom are friends of the county’s biggest local citrus farming family and hereditary Justices of the Peace, thought my research specialty sounded like a doctrine that made White people feel bad. As educational leaders, the Board knew that this sort of thing had been criminalized in Florida by their great hero, and eminent political leader Kon Falangist.”

“I am basically an itinerant metic, an academic hod-carrier, an educated peon,” said Morton. “This is how higher education in America works now. Most of the so-called faculty in the country are also in my shoes. We are all on food stamps.”

“This seems very inappropriate,” said Kandude, “for as my preceptor, the late excellent Professor B always said, ‘next in importance to freedom and capitalism is education, and without education, especially in business and finance, the others cannot be maintained.’ Though a great scholar, he also championed the notion that the best of all education ultimately came not from books or in the classroom but in the fierce jungle of market competition.”

“It seems that your professor had a very particular philosophy,” said Morton.

“Indeed,” responded Kandude. “He was an immensely learned and nurturing teacher. He believed that all was for the best in this best of all capitalistic worlds. But that suggests that your plight is for the best. I must admit that my recent experiences are filling me with perfidious doubts.”

“Well,” said Morton, “in my experience, the greedy, the violent and the ignorant govern the larger course of so-called civilization, no matter the decency one might observe at smaller scales. Even if there were a God, he seems to have abandoned this blue sphere to some malignant being, who has placed his degenerate demons in charge of countries, legislatures, courts, Florida-based members-only clubs, and corporations everywhere. I have seen few countries that do not desire the subordination and exploitation of all the others. Everywhere, the weak gravitate to the powerful, before whom they either cringe or to whom instead they become fanatical disciples, even if those figures are despicable and utterly careless of the people’s lives.”

“The powerful exploit both the weak and the sycophants like the sheep whose wool and flesh they sell, even as they swell and glow in both the unmerited devotion of the ignorant masses and false praise of cynical parasites. Even in those places where they seem to enjoy peace, the inhabitants are devoured by as much envy, care and uneasiness as those experienced by a besieged town. Anger has risen to a warlike boil against fabricated enemies, contrived betrayals of a nostalgic past that never was, and trumped-up threats to a fictional and unjust state of racial and religious privilege to which many feel entitled. Those willing to tap into this anger for power and profit are legion and utterly without shame. All that I have seen and experienced has made of me a veritable Schopenhauer.”

After a moment's reflection and glance for approval from Tanemahuta, Kandude said, "Morton, why don't you come with us. We are headed, for better or for worse, to Texas. Perhaps we can exchange thoughts and experiences and formulate plans for the good of one another."

Morton, finding the company of the two friends agreeable compared to most, and the prospects of living penniless at the Flying Q in the middle of Idaho unappealing, readily agreed. When Kandude was paying at the cashier, the device began making a persistent dinging sound, and even as the transaction went through, lines of code began streaming across the screen of his cellphone. A young fellow at a nearby table leaped up, looked over Kandude's shoulder at the screen, and told him to immediately shut the device off.

"Your accounts are under attack!" said the young man, a thin fellow with thick glasses wearing jeans and a Link-in Park T-shirt.

"But who are they? What do they want, and how are they getting into this amazingly sophisticated device?" asked Kandude.

The young man waved them over to his table where he was working at a fancy laptop and drinking a 36-ounce Mountain Dew. "It's an arms race," he said. "Millions of hackers, including vicious state actors, criminal syndicates, Wells Fargo account executives, and amateur tech terrorists are working around the clock all over the planet to get into everyone's stuff. Let's take a look at some of that code. If I can recapture some screen memory offline, maybe I can see what kind of black stuff is going on here."

The young man, whose name was Elliot, played around with the device for a bit, taking a couple of screenshots with his smart phone. He got on his laptop and his fingers flew across the keyboard like Mozart playing a piano concerto on speed.

"This looks like a fairly garden-variety phishing attack. Somehow your account lit up somewhere, which in cyberspace these days is the same as everywhere, as a target of opportunity. It doesn't look like your account has been compromised, which I can test with a couple of dummy transactions, but you need to be hypervigilant because apparently you are now on the cybercriminal radar."

Kandude thanked Elliot warmly. They exchanged stories. Elliot had gone to TechCal as a young teen, and even before graduating was bombarded with job offers from intelligence agencies, hedge funds, high frequency trading operations, and international crime syndicates such as the Tantor Organization.

"Goodbye to all that," said Elliot. "I am deconstructing everything I've created since age 6 and getting off the grid. I'm headed for the Methow Valley. But Dude, tell me more about your plans to rescue your girlfriend."

"My dear Cardoshia was last in an alarming situation at a sovereign citizen redoubt in Texas. I don't know if she is still there, but I must find her." Kandude showed Elliot his precious picture of Cardoshia.

"Holy guacamole, Dude – that's Kitty Belladonna of Laguna Beach! She's a megastar in the computer science program at TechCal, which, admittedly, consists largely of incels. Or at least she was - she dropped off the web two or three months ago," said Elliot. "I had a premium subscription that's actually still paid up, darn it. Hey, let me see that picture again."

Elliot took a picture of the picture with his laptop camera and ran it through a facial recognition software program. In short order, he found several matches to advertisements on a platform called PrayerBuddy. There was Cardoshia, as beautiful as ever, in photos with the captions "Find Your Holy Spirit" and "Get the Scripture in

Your Picture.” Cardoshia, now apparently going by the name Zipporah, modestly dressed and tastefully posed, was handling a God Bless the USA Bible in one ad and several snakes in another.

“I can’t tell much from these posted pics,” said Elliot. “But they are recent, and from the context, it looks like she is participating in some kind of old timey church thing. I’m not religious, but I might be down.”

Elliot did more stuff on his laptop too quickly for Kandude to follow. “I’m going to say there is a better than 50% chance that these ads originate in the Nashville area. Lots of serpent churches there, I’ve heard. Sorry I can’t do more with these for you gents. Take my advice – keep your device shut off except for brief transactions. Get a couple of burner phones here at the Flying Q trucker mart and only use them in an emergency.”

Kandude and Tanemahuta thanked Elliot warmly and wished him a successful journey.

As the three men resumed their journey east, they noticed that a red Cadillac had fallen in behind them. It seemed to be following them, as it stayed in position no matter how they varied their speed. The Cadillac, in turn, was joined by a silver Audi sedan, then other late model vehicles. When they pulled into the Flying Q for gas in Utah, the Cadillac and the Audi pulled in nearby, just as a dozen other recent model cars wheeled swiftly into the station, arraying themselves around the Subaru. Men and women with brief cases and portfolios leapt out of the cars and rushed up to Kandude, Tanemahuta and Morton, urgently trying to sell them precious metal futures, stocks and bonds, cryptocurrencies, Caribbean islands, prepaid funeral arrangements, Ukrainian brides, quintuple point credit cards, time shares, whole-body CAT scans and other products too numerous to absorb.

When the tank was full, Kandude, Morton and Tanemahuta jumped into Subaru, forced the doors shut against the many grasping hands, and sped back out to the highway. The salespeople leaped back into their cars and followed, jockeying wildly for position in a frenzied peddler’s Peloton. Tanemahuta, studying the map, directed Kandude to veer suddenly off the highway up a rough dirt road into the hills, taking advantage of the Subaru Forester’s superior off-road capabilities. The mad hawkers plunged after them, partially blinded by a plume of dust. But when the giant Suburban that had captured the lead position suddenly rolled over, the rest of the vender’s phalanx thundered into a violent pileup, scattering wreckage for half a mile along the road. The trio worked their way back to the highway and continued east, dismayed by the hell storm of capitalism unleashed by the cyberworld’s discovery of their newfound fortune.



CHAPTER XVII HOW THE TRAVELERS MET AN HONEST MAN IN KANSAS

Alert to mercantile predators, the travelers continued east, finding themselves eventually in a pleasant small town in Kansas. Morton suggested that it might be wise to transfer some of the money from the device to a safer location. With some trepidation, they stopped at a small local bank and spoke to the teller, asking if it was possible to open an account with funds from their device. They had no idea of how much to transfer. The teller said they should talk to Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey politely ushered the three men into a small conference room with a polished wooden table. He was a tall gray-haired Black man well into his sixties. He welcomed the men and said that, against all odds, he was a third-generation member of the small family-owned bank. Without a word about its origins, Kandude explained that their sole access to funds was through the device, and though it worked like a charm, it seemed to attract a horde of relentless cyber-attackers and implacable promoters. He asked for Mr. Bailey's advice.

Mr. Bailey reflected for a couple of minutes. "Gentlemen," he said, "your story, unfortunately, is not unique. I cannot tell you how many of our small businessmen and older neighbors - and our clients are neighbors first, and clients second - have been badgered, deceived, and fleeced, especially by online scammers. I realize that your assets are none of my business, other than any you may entrust to me, but how much money did you wish to transfer from this troubled account?"

Kandude confessed that he had no head for finance, but told Mr. Bailey how much was in the device account. Mr. Bailey's eyes widened in astonishment. "This is a sum, my friends, that must be handled with the utmost care. My bank is not the best place to hold and manage assets of this magnitude. I don't know how you ended up here, but I am glad you did not happen into the bank of my competitor, Mr. Potter, for even though he is a deacon at the United Methodist Church, he is an avaricious banker who cares for money far more than for his fellow human beings."

"My suggestion is this: put perhaps \$100,000 into a money market with a companion checking account here for immediate safety. I will give you debit cards for the account. Each of you two, Messrs. Kandude and Tanemahuta, as joint owners, should take out no more than \$5000 in cash to allow you to operate offline during your road trip. Leave your dangerously attractive device turned off except in an emergency. If you need additional cash, call me and we will work it out through a reliable bank near your location. When you reach the end of your journey, contact me and I will help you identify a trustworthy institution at a place of your choosing to determine the best way to safeguard your wealth."

Kandude and Tanemahuta immediately agreed to follow this prudent advice, but also requested dispersal of \$5000 to Morton, over the latter's objection.

Morton observed that Mr. Bailey appeared to be an artifact from another time and place whose discovery was a stroke of fortune. Over lunch, the three friends sorted out their options. As they were unable to be certain of Cardoshia's actual location, they decided to split up. Tanemahuta, who was unknown to Squire K, would head to the Freeman Ranch on an undercover surveillance mission. Kandude and Morton would head to Nashville. They went to a used car lot to buy another Subaru, discovering that Kansas had even more special fees and taxes than Washington and, using the debit card, paid \$31,675 for the car with a sticker price of \$13,000.

Tanemahuta headed south. Kandude and Morton continued east, Kandude keeping charge of the device. That night, even without being turned on, the device started beeping and code once again began scrolling across the

screen. Then came a message: “We have locked your account, homies. Send us your digital key and we will let you keep half.”

Morton said, “Needless to say, if you give them the key, they will leave you not a single rupee.” Kandude nodded. He walked to the back of the Forester and threw the device into the spare tire well. They could hardly hear the beeping while underway. “It was nice to be rich for a while. But thanks to Mr. Bailey, we are far from broke,” observed Kandude.



CHAPTER XVIII KANDUDE AND MORTON VISIT THE HOLY LAND

By afternoon of the next day, Kandude and Morton found themselves in Nashville. Unsure how to focus their search, they stopped in at a neighborhood library to see if there was a church directory or other helpful resource. They found the reference librarian in a back room. She was crying as she threw stacks of books into a rollaway trash bin while checking off titles on a list that was several pages long.

The librarian, who wore a badge that said Mandy Brooks, said that she had been ordered by the newly appointed Library Board to dispose of a long list of books that in any way mentioned slavery and racism; sexual development or activity by anyone under 21; sex outside of Christian marriage; sex involving non-missionary postures; the words “sex,” “breast,” “buttocks” or “organ”; non-binary gender references; colonialism; historical treatment of Native Americans; anything that might suggest that Christianity isn’t the one true religion and all others aren’t a total crock; all books written or published in California; and materials suggesting that free speech rights and literacy values should interfere with banning books. At the moment Mandy Brooks was pitching books titled *The Bluest Eye*, *They Called Themselves the K.K.K.*, *Lord of the Rings*, *Changing Bodies*, *Growing Up*, *Sex and Sexual Health*, and *Animal Farm*.

“We librarians and many local teachers did our best to resist these orders,” said Mandy Brook, “but then I started getting notes telling me that they know where my children play, suggestions that I need to be given a personal lesson about having proper sex with real men, and explicit death threats. Somebody tagged “House of Satan’s Works” on the front of the library, and they swatted my house.”

Even though they didn’t know what ‘swatting’ was, Kandude and Morton expressed shock and dismay over this turn of events and offered their sympathies. “My dear Professor B,” said Kandude, “always said that ‘libraries are the true arsenals of democracy.’”

“This is shameful, indeed,” added Morton. “Librarians should be honored as learned travel guides to the world of knowledge. Censorship is a universal harbinger of fascism. Of course, what else can you expect in these depraved times, which, unfortunately, are much the same as any other times.”

Mandy Brooks thanked them for their concern, expressing the wish that more would rise up in opposition to the reactionary Thought Police. However, in spite of her distress, being a true librarian, she asked how she could help them. After learning of their quest and admiring the picture of Cardoshia, she observed that the entire state was a teeming nest of fundamentalist churches. However, it seemed to her at least somewhat likely that a church with a budget for this kind of recruiting might well be a wealthy Megachurch.

“The grandest megachurch in the region is the Booty of God Cathedral, near the little town of Crassus not far off highway 41,” said the good librarian. “It was started about five years ago by Pastor Boral Copensteam. These days, cars full of worshippers pour in from all over the state every Sunday. Which happens to be tomorrow.”

After thanking the librarian and wishing her well, Kandude and Morton found a place for BBQ and a cheap motel for the night. The next morning, after a visit to Dunkin Donuts, they headed out to the Booty of God Cathedral, swept along in a swelling stream of traffic headed for the same destination.

They followed the pack through a large green and gold arch into a rolling woodland campus, passing a private airfield with several sleek jets and an 18-hole golf course with each hole numbered after a Biblical verse. They rounded a corner, and there, atop a manicured hilltop, stood a vast building with two lofty crystal towers topped

with golden domes and crosses. On approach, there was a large overflow parking lot with a massive Jumbotron allowing people to attend services from their cars. This lot had hundreds of parking spots demarcated by little poles with some sort of module mounted on top.

Kandude and Morton parked and joined the throng, entering the cathedral through giant green and gold doors. Inside was a space that appeared to be able to hold at least 10,000 people, with ascending tiers of pews filling each transept. At the culmination of the nave, was a stage big enough to put on Phantom of the Opera. Twin choirs with hundreds of gospel singers in glittering green and gold robes flanked the stage. Eight Jumbotrons hung from the vaulted ceiling which itself featured luminous green and gold expanses of stained glass. On the screens Kandude and Morton could see that the name of the choir was "The Divine Mammonites." Somewhat overwhelmed, they took seats in the back.

Suddenly there erupted a great fanfare and the Divine Mammonites burst into gospel song. The Pastor Boral Copensteam and his beautiful wife swept in from a central runway to the thunderous applause of the multitude. Pastor Copensteam bounded up to the microphone array, replicated on a large scale by his own enormous images on the mammoth screens, and basked in applause with a dazzling smile that would make a tax-deductible continuing education credit cruise ship full of cosmetic dentists lose consciousness. An elaborate camera system worthy of the NFL Superbowl captured the action for the remote participants and pre-recorded fundraising events.

"Brothers and sisters in Jesus," he intoned, drawing out the name 'Jeeezuzz,' "welcome to the holiest fiscal day of the week here at our Booty of God Cathedral." More applause ensued. "Let me remind you all on this holy day, of the Parable of the Talents, in which those who double their master's money will be known as good and faithful servants, and those who offer no returns on investment shall be rightfully deemed wicked and slothful servants."

"Today we are truly blessed by the Lord," continued Pastor Copensteam, "to welcome into our midst as our featured guest a true apostle of our redeemer and most esteemed celebrity spiritual counselor to our President for Life, Tantor von Pyubengrabber." The crowd clapped, gasped, and nearly swooned at the full formal name of their True President.

"Visiting from her ministry in the great faithful state of Florida, and fresh from sharing the light of the Lord at Mor on Logo, it is my great privilege to welcome Righteous Reverend Pawlah Whallah!"

The Divine Mammonites swelled in joyful harmony. The loud thumping of a helicopter descending onto the rooftop helipad shook the entire church. As the sound of rotor blades subsided, a stunning blonde woman in a sleek pink dress flowed down the runway, trailed by an entourage of six men in elegant black suits, and mirrored above by her colossal Jumbotron replicas. The congregation exploded.

Arriving at the microphones, Righteous Reverend Pawlah Whallah was met with hugging, kissing and tears by Pastor Copensteam and beautiful Co-Pastor Mrs. Copensteam. Pastor Copensteam expressed his boundless spiritual joy through highly animated hugging and petting of the renowned Reverend Pawlah. After disconnecting from this warm greeting, Reverend Pawlah approached the microphones, waving and mouthing thank you during the several minutes it took for the tumult to subside.

"I can feel the power of the spirit in this house," she said in a throaty voice, "and I know that here today are gathered children of destiny who will attain perfect health, abundant wealth, and glory in the eyes of God and man. For many of you are now, and all of you can be, people of the covenant. As with any sacred membership,

such as my membership in the private club at Mor on Logo (at this mention the crowd murmured), the covenant requires the contribution of an initial membership fee and appropriate ongoing dues.”

“Before we go deeper into today’s sacred commitments of spirit and finances, I must speak to you frankly about a moral imperative of our time, second only to the godly accumulation of wealth,” said Reverend Pawlah. “We all know that our country and our Christian faith face great peril. In order to preserve and protect our faith, our footing, and our finances, I say unto you that it is our duty - *it is your duty* - to pray and vote for our President for Life Tantor von Pyubengrabber (here Reverend Pawlah slipped into a rhythmic cadence), to forever guide our holy congregation, to forever lead our Christian nation, and to forever thwart unjust taxation. Furthermore, I say unto you, as the Gospel teaches, our True President’s righteousness, infallibility, and status as the ordained defender of our faith and fortunes are indisputably proven by his limitless wealth, fortitude, and divine immunity from assassination attempts, which may only be achieved by the grace of God.”

The vast congregation stood as one, clapping wildly. Many took up the chant “TvP, TvP...” while others intoned “Whallah Christian America! Whallah Christian America!”

As the clamor subsided and the Divines tunes receded to a soothing background hum, Reverend Pawlah leaned into the microphones. “If you are sick, investing in God will make you well. If you are hungry, investing in God will bring you sustenance. If you are poor, investing in God will make you rich. The more you invest, the greater the returns. God is the great Banker in Heaven - this church is just his ordained earthly cashier. I urge each and every one of you now to sow these resurrection seeds during this limited sacred window of opportunity.”

At this moment, card readers mounted in front of each congregant lit up with bright red flashing LED lights. Pastor Copensteam stepped up to the microphone again, putting a warm ministerial arm around his fellow broker in Christ, Reverend Pawlah. “I say to you all that now is the moment to tap. Tap for the Kingdom. Tap for the Power. Tap for the Glory.” His voice was melodious, hypnotic, and compelling. “Know that this tapping is tapping into the greatest mutual fund of all, the Mutual Fund of God. And your tapping will, as surely as day follows night, be richly rewarded here on earth.”

The congregants began reaching into their wallets and purses, extracting credit and debit cards and began tapping the card readers with a fervor born of their love of God, compound interest, and high yields. By the thousands, the red flashing LEDs turned to steady greens. Soon only Kandude and Morton stood with Red Beacons of Shame, captured close up on every merciless Jumbotron. The rapt attention of the greenlit multitude gazed upon them, 10,000 strong.

Morton grabbed Kandude’s arm. “We need to get out of here,” he urged. He pulled Kandude from the pew and they fled out through the massive front doors, escaping just as they swung shut and locked behind them. They could see themselves running from the church on the outdoor Jumbotron, but quickly the cameras cut away and Reverend Pawlah resumed the proceedings as if nothing untoward had happened.

On the outdoor screen, Reverend Pawlah exhorted the faithful to renew their commitments, and called upon members of the congregation, especially those new to the church, to come forward to the Altar for a Second Work of Grace. She reminded those blessed respondents to bring up their wallets, jewelry, watches and spare change.

In the meantime, Kandude and Morton were making a beeline for their Subaru. As they were fleeing, someone in a rusty old Honda watching the service on the outdoor jumbotron honked and urgently waved them over. A middle-aged man and woman in threadbare Sunday clothes sat in the car, beside which a card reader on a pole

was flashing red. They pointed at three men in dark suits and green and gold ties, walking briskly across the lawn toward them. "Follow us, friends – the Collection Disciples are after us!"

The Honda wheeled around and sped away. Kandude and Morton jumped into the Subaru and followed. They wound their way through a back road and away from the campus, across which were arrayed a multitude of surveillance cameras.

The couple in the Honda drove a somewhat circuitous route, finally arriving at a small park on the shores of a beautiful lake. The couple got out and introduced themselves as John and Mary. They indicated that Kandude and Morton were not likely to be followed, but warned that the Collection Disciples now had their license plates and would be sure to add them to the church rolls, mailing lists, and lucrative prayer visit rosters.

John and Mary commended the two men for resisting the financial seductions of God's cashiers Copensteam and Whallah. "We were once deeply faithful to the BoG church," said John and Mary. "We gave every cent we had, and for years worked jobs at the church for less than minimum wage, barely surviving in hopes that our Resurrection Seeds would finally bloom. While there, we eventually noticed there was a great deal of traffic from various investment firms, Mediterranean looking fellows in pinstripe suits, and luxury car dealers."

"Pastor Copensteam seemed to have very warm relationships with several among his large numbers of young, attractive personal assistants of both sexes. The Pastor got a Gulfstream G650, and we got letters urging us to activate our automatic deduction Prayer Request Accounts and go deeper into debt. We believe in our Lord Jesus the Redeemer and the value of prayer and hard work, but suspect there is something not right at the BoG."

Kandude and Morton commiserated. "The whole experience did seem a bit disconcerting," offered Kandude, "but my learned advisor, Professor B, would likely have been impressed by the syncretism of profits and prophets. Anyway, thank you for getting us out of there."

John and Mary asked them to share their story. After learning of their quest and admiring the picture of Cardoshia, they said they had never seen her, but shared that another fast-growing church seemed to be making a name for itself and was lately making some use of the media. They said the Bible Nation: Da-Vision Church was not far away, in the small town of Jericho.



CHAPTER XIX SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IS AN ABOMINATION

Kandude and Morton set out for Jericho, arriving after a short drive. It was easy to find the large industrial fabric warehouse building surrounded by hundreds of older cars and trucks. Flying atop the building was an array of large red, white and blue striped flags with a centered blue rectangle containing a red cross. As luck would have it, a service was just getting underway.

The two travelers approached the entrance, where they were met by friendly men in jeans and Bible Nation: Da-Vision Church T-shirts with the blue rectangle and red cross motif. The men were all wearing large scissors in leather shoulder holsters, and several of them had bundles of severed N-95 face masks hanging from their belts like trophies. Seeing no masks, gay pride symbols, Ivy League rings, or Donkeycrat gear, the men welcomed the two men into the church.

“Don’t forget,” reminded one of the T-shirts, “the book burning will be held in the South parking lot immediately after the service. Coffee and donuts will be provided.” Several of the people entering with Kandude and Morton people held up their copies of Harry Potter books, the *Twilight* series, and *The Handmaid’s Tale* they had brought along for the festive incineration of Satan’s works.

Inside the capacious industrial building, a throng of people, many in jeans, T-shirts and MAWA hats, filled the hundreds of folding chairs. Lacking the opulence and Jumbotrons of the BoC Cathedral, this church had big screen televisions from Wal-Mart mounted throughout the building. Behind and above the modest stage, there was a huge banner featuring the image of True President for Life TvP seated at the Resolute Desk with a phantasmagorical Jesus standing behind him, laying blessing hands on the True President’s shoulders.

Just inside the entrance, were tables of church merch: T-shirts, books, posters, and red cross Christian flags. There were racks of eye dropper bottles containing anointing oils with names like, “Solomon Cinnamon,” “Zephyr of Salvation,” “Jasmine of Jehoshaphat,” and “Holy Gunsmoke.” There were piles of Pastor Cotton Matherlock’s book *Locking on to the Lord: The Bible Is Our Constitution*. A side display featured pillows with American flags and Lady Liberty on them (‘EXTRAVAGANZA SALE TODAY: ONLY \$25) next to a life size cardboard cutout of a mustachioed man in a suit and tie hugging a pillow.

Nearby was a large bulletin board covered with glossy headshots of the Reverend Cotton Matherlock, his beautiful wife Nylona, and a dozen or so staff members. There was a 70” flat screen showing a dynamic loop of the Reverend, his beautiful wife, joyful crowds, Christian music groups rockin’ the house, variations on the cartoonish figure with a feathery orange headdress, and American and Christian flags waving in the breeze. But no Cardoshia.

Kandude showed the picture of his beloved to one of the ladies handling merch sales, and asked if she recognized her. The lady shook her head and told Kandude that the Total Redemption Pack of anointing oils was on a killer special.

At that moment, the music video recording of the J6 Patriot Felon’s Choir faded to a solemn denouement. Pastor Cotton Matherlock sprang up on the modest stage to tumultuous applause, in which he participated enthusiastically. Not wanting to appear conspicuous, Kandude and Morton took seats on folding chairs in the back.

Pastor Matherlock spoke in low voice, the crowd suddenly hushed. "Do you love our Lord Jesus Christ?" he asked. The crowd thundered its affirmation. Pastor Matherlock raised his voice. "Do you love our once glorious America?" Again, the crowd gave it up. Prancing suddenly about the stage with spasmodic gesticulations, Pastor Matherlock bellowed, "Do you love our Past and Future President, True President Tantor von Pyubengrabbler?" The crowd went wild.

Pastor Matherlock waited a half a minute, then went on in a calmer voice. "Then I say unto you that the separation of church and state is a vicious lie. The Constitution, which rests on top of the Bible, itself the true founding document of our Christian nation, says NOTHING about the separation of church and state. God gave birth to this nation, and the founders were his faithful midwives."

Amid resounding applause, the Pastor went on. "The uncontestable truth that America is a Christian nation has been unequivocally documented by the world's greatest living historian, Bart Davonfogger, who has shown that this God-and-American-hating myth of Separation is a latter-day invention of atheists, communists, and left-wing historians and lawyers from Yale, Harvard, and Berkeley." At the mention of these condescending nests of intellectual and moral depravity the crowd booed.

"Dr. Davonfogger has marshalled crushing reams of scholarship showing that the founding fathers intended government leaders to be God's inspired prophets, its cabinet officials his loyal apostles, and its administrators his obedient scribes. God in heaven ordained not secular bureaucrats, but faithful Christian theocrats. And now, in these times of toxic secularism, God looked down on his embattled paradise and said, 'I need a caretaker.' And in a latter-day miracle of divine injection, God gave us our True President for Life Tantor von Pyubengrabbler."

At this pronouncement, Pastor Matherlock turned around to the great banner portraying President for Life TvP and his personal sponsor Jesus and raised his arms in exultation. The congregation stood, waved, whooped and clamored.

The Pastor continued. "President TvP, God's chosen emissary who loves, lives, and reads the Bible every day of his life, will put God and morality back in the White House, make the Bible the supreme law of the land, and expel the infidels from this Christian nation." At this the crowd leaped to its feet and screamed its acclamation.

"Pastor Matherlock turned back to the crowd. Remember the teachings of our contemporary prophets, who only yesterday walked, and even still, walk among us? Rob Patinstoner. Janus Fillwell. Jerrod Dobsnite." Hosannas issued from the crowd at the names of each of these saints.

"Before we go deeper into today's sacred commitments of spirit and politics, I must speak to you frankly about a moral imperative of our time, second only to defeat of the minions of Satan," said Paster Matherlock. I say unto you that it is our duty - *it is your duty* - to pray and vote for our President for Life, True President Tantor von Pyubengrabbler.

"You cannot vote for a Donkeycrat and call yourself an American. You cannot vote for a Donkeycrat and call yourself a Christian. You cannot let THEM steal elections. You cannot let THEM steal America. You cannot let THEM, those principalities, those Forces of Darkness, compel Christians to have vaccinations that have killed millions of people. You know what you need to do. Because our True President for Life has told you."

Unbeknownst to Kandude and Morton, a couple of the Bible Nation: Da-Vision Church T-shirt men had noticed their lack of enthusiasm for Pastor Matherlock's exhortations. One of them spoke briefly into his cellphone, and moments later a T-shirt man sidled up on the stage and whispered something in the Pastor's ear.

Suddenly Pastor Matherlock' face was twisted into anger and contempt. He leaped to the microphone. "We have discovered two witches right here in church with us today," he shrieked. The pastor danced across the stage in a strange chopping and hopping sequence. "We do not fear you, you stinkin witches, you Satan spawn!"

Busting a couple more bizarre toprocking moves, he pointed all the way to the back of the church to where Kandude and Morton were sitting.

"You spell-casting, pharmakeia demon dingoes. We will cast you out! Just say a single word - just utter a single breath against God, Country, and TvP and we will expose you. We will get your addresses and your social security numbers. We will discover online pictures of you drinking the blood of Christian babies. We will cast you from the midst of our holy congregation. If you even think about trying to render evil spells, you will be hurled into the flames during our festive after-service book burning ceremony."

"Uh oh," murmured Morton. "I'm pretty sure he is talking about us." Kandude and Morton sprang to their feet. The knot of T-shirt men that had been closing in on them shrank back in terror at the sudden animation of the two witches. Seizing the moment, the two travelers plunged through a gap, ran past the pit where the Deacons of Holy Flames were preparing for the book burning, and made it to their Subaru, thanks in part to the trepidation of their halfhearted pursuers. Behind them, they heard Lee Greenwood's God Bless the U.S.A. booming from the speakers.

They hurtled across the back roads to a two-lane highway, then onto the interstate and the safety of a Flying Q. There they sat dejected over cans of Pepsi, frustrated by the fruitless search for the beloved Cardoshia and demoralized by the day's religious displays.

As they wearily shuffled out of the café, Morton spotted a flyer for an old-fashioned Tent Revival meeting on the bulletin board near the exit. The simple black and white xerox copy featured a Grant Wood-like picture of a preacher and what might be his family in front of a tent, and advertised meetings at 6 P.M. for three nights, beginning the next day. But what captured Kandude's attention was a tagline at the bottom that read: "*Introducing Special Witness of Christ, Zipporah.*" Beside which was a simple drawing of a lovely young woman handling a serpent.



CHAPTER XX THAT OLD TIME RELIGION

Kandude and Morton spent the night at the modest Blackgum Inn near Smyrna. The next day, they drove up into the hills, following the directions from the Tent Revival poster. They took narrow, meandering blacktop roads, finally turning off onto a dirt road that led to a large sunlit glade. A weatherbeaten old circus tent big enough to hold perhaps several hundred people had been erected in the middle of the glade. Forty or fifty rusty old cars and trucks were already parked there.

In front of the tent were signs announcing the service at 6 P.M. with a black and white picture of an older gentleman in a suit with the name Reverend Jonathan Bedwards. Another sign had a Bible verse:

Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.

— Luke 10:19

People were gathered into knots around some of the vehicles or sitting on blankets, many with picnic baskets. The people, young and old, were mostly dressed in shabby clothes and many did not look well fed. Quite a few of the men looked a bit rough. Most of the people had bad teeth and not many of them. A lot of the older and even middle-aged folks appeared crippled or unwell. However, they talked and laughed together and seemed to be having a fine summer afternoon. For some reason, the scene reminded Kandude vaguely of something from a book set in the Great Depression.

A tall thin fellow, surrounded by two or three generations of family, was cooking hot dogs on a cheap charcoal grill. Seeing Kandude and Morton wandering about at loose ends, he waved them over and welcomed them to hot dogs, generic potato chips from a big bag labeled “potato chips,” and cans of Mountain Dew and Diet Coke from a beat-up Styrofoam cooler. The family group was reserved; save for the friendly griller, the men watched the strangers with suspicion. But they warmed up when Kandude picked up a football and started throwing long spirals to the kids and allowing the younger ones to try to tackle him, which more than half a dozen of them could not do until Kandude dramatically collapsed under their combined weight. A couple of the men joined in passing the pigskin.

The afternoon faded, and in time Reverend Jonathan Bedwards, wearing a clean but old-fashioned suit, came out with his pleasant looking gray-haired wife and two sons, and, smiling warmly, waved all the brothers and sisters to the service. He gently shook hands with every person who entered the tent, greeting many by name.

Inside the tent, rows of old wooden folding chairs were set out facing a simple wooden platform. A pair of large, battered wooden boxes flanked the platform. A heavy chrome billet microphone on a stand was hooked up to a single large box speaker on the floor. There were no television screens. Behind the wooden platform, a large banner was suspended from the tent canopy showing a large figure with a corpulent visage and wearing a feathery orange headdress, crucified in the likeness of Jesus. An American flag served as a loin cloth in the dramatic image. Kandude and Morton exchanged dumbstruck glances at the bizarre depiction.

As the crowd began filtering in, a band featuring an upright piano, a fiddle, an electric guitar with a stand speaker, a fiddle, and a mandolin struck up some twangy music that was wholly unfamiliar to Kandude. So far, there was no sign of Cardoshia/Zipporah.

The kindly looking Reverend Bedwards approached the microphone. He pointed out to the crowd with both hands, index fingers extended, sweeping left to right, and right to left. "Brothers and sisters in Christ," he growled. "You are sinners." He waited 15 seconds before continuing. "And God is angry. His anger is thunder and lightning. His wrath is molten lava surging from the mouth of a volcano. And you, sinners, like all natural men, are held in the hand of the dreadfully provoked God over the fiery pit of hell whose scorching embrace you richly deserve, and into which you shall almost surely be cast. When the thin thread of your sinful lives is cut, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, His hand shall pitch you into the gaping maw to burn forever in the sulfurous flames. Hell is a place of perpetual punishment; a place of eternal torment; a place of infinite agony; a place of everlasting despair."

The Reverend's voice ascended, sonorous, rhythmic, sing-songing. "I can hear the howling of Satan's territorial spirit-demons and can see their snarling hellhounds stalking your sinful spirits right here in this holy place tonight. They will seize you in their slaving jaws and deliver you to the raging inferno."

The crowd began to sway, groan and weep.

The Reverend continued: "The End Time is nigh. The signs are all around us. You must embrace the Covenant of the Lord. You must repent your wickedness, the forgiveness of which is made possible only by the crucifixion of the Lord. You must be sherpas on the expedition to ascend the Seven Mountains. You must be foot-soldiers in the war against Babylon. Only by these gossamer threads of salvation, held by the hand of God and existing only by his will, may you avert the journey to perdition."

By now almost all the congregation were waving their hands in the air and swaying, dancing, sobbing, and chanting the name of the Lord. Reverend Bedwards continued. "Let us ever heed the admonitions of the Apostles: Sister Aimee Semple. Reverend AJ Tomlinson. Sister Shari Falconer."

The crowd shouted hosannas at the names of the Prophets. They were now laughing, wailing, and gyrating in a frenzy of woeful ecstasy. "As we invoke the names of our Prophets and Apostles, I must name another," pronounced the Reverend gravely. "I must speak to you about a moral imperative of our time, second only to your personal covenant with the Lord. God so loved the world, that he gave us his newly begotten son. I say unto you that it is our duty - *it is your duty* - to pray and vote for The Second Son, our President for Life, True President Tantor von Pyubengrabbler. Only through this elective sacrament can we guarantee dominion in this our Christian Nation."

A woman who had been whirling and sobbing suddenly broke out loudly in a strange ululation in a language Kandude and Morton had never heard. Morton, a man of significant linguistic erudition, shook his head. The congregants, joining the Reverend, turned to the speaker, rapt, and held their upraised hands toward her.

"Tantorstan pisvo talibannity gobly bamblo koku floogubly braxo trumpizidioto quatzly talwingo," uttered the woman. She repeated these unintelligible words over and over until she fell backwards to the sawdust covered ground.

Reverend Bedwards leaped down to the floor over the fallen woman, and with a blessing to her fevered forehead exclaimed, "Slain in the spirit is your servant. The truth of the Holy Spirit is certainly embedded in her heavenly tongue though we mortal sinners may not comprehend it." Many hands raised the inspired woman and placed her gently on a chair.

“Brothers and sisters,” said the Reverend to the hushed assembly, “now is the time for a demonstration of true faith in the Lord.” He gestured toward an opening in the tent behind the band, and through that opening walked Cardoshia. Kandude gasped with both shock and joy to see his beloved. She was in a long plain dress with a white lacey cap on her head. She wore no makeup. Contrary to her native vibrancy, her eyes were dark and downcast, and she appeared subdued and remote. She looked much older than she had just a few weeks ago. She walked slowly to the middle of the platform.

Reverend Bedwards’ two sons opened the large, well-worn boxes at either side of the platform, and each took out intertwined bundles of several large, writhing snakes, handling them with practiced and fearless ease.

“Sister Zipporah is new to our ministry,” announced the Reverend, “yet she manifests a sweetness of the spirit and a true faith in the Lord.”

On the platform, Cardoshia held her arms outstretched in a crucifixion pose, mimicking the banner behind her, as the brothers draped the snakes around her neck and arms. The band struck up another twangy tune. Sister Zipporah closed her eyes and began to shake and gyrate, heedless of her serpentine vestments, as the congregation joined, humming, praying and dancing along in sympathetic rhythm.

Kandude started to lunge toward the platform, but Morton restrained him. “If you disrupt this, you only increase the danger,” Morton said. “This seems crazy to us, but these folks do this all the time. It is best to defer to their native expertise. Let us approach the Reverend and let him know that you are her friend.” They carefully sidled up to Reverend Bedwards and Kandude touched him on the elbow.

“Sister Zipporah – Cardoshia - is my beloved friend from childhood, Reverend,” whispered Kandude. “We have crossed the country in search of her.”

The Reverend eyes widened in surprise. “Bless the Lord,” he said. “Sister Zipporah has become dear to us in a short time, but she is surely something of a lost soul. It is a miracle that the Lord has brought you to her. Do not worry. She is safe in her faith in the Holy Spirit, and we will reunite you in short order.”

The snakes were passed around to the other transported celebrants as they made their viperous testaments of faith. Fortunately, no one was bitten. The service wound down and the band led the congregants in “The Old Rugged Church” and “How Great is Our God.”

The Reverend summoned Sister Zipporah/Cardoshia and pulled Kandude toward her in hushed expectation. Zipporah/Cardoshia raised her eyes, looked at Kandude, but showed no sign recognition, even when Kandude softly called her name. Kandude stood there uncertainly. The Reverend and his wife tenderly sat Sister Zipporah/Cardoshia at the end of a large wooden table that their sons had carried into the room.

“She seems to have that condition that soldiers get after returning from war, young man,” said the Reverend. We have seen this among our own boys when they return to the hills from the service. You and your friend must join us for a small gathering, and we will see if the light might dawn in her eyes.”

A group of perhaps fifteen or twenty members of the congregation gathered around the table, which was soon laden with peach cobbler, lattice top apple pie, homemade cookies, pineapple upside down cake, orange Jello, cider and coffee.

“These are elders of our congregation who have worshipped with us for many years. Some of the oldest go back to my father’s time,” said Reverend Bedwards. He introduced Kandude and Morton to the elders and explained their quest. The elders murmured greetings and offered blessings to Sister Zipporah/Cardoshia.

“Sister Zipporah has clearly been through some sort of ordeal, although we are sparse on the details,” the Reverend related. “We travel a circuit from Kentucky to West Texas, as did my father before us, and were invited to give a service at an isolated ranch some distance from Abilene.”

“Squire Kannon of the Freeman Ranch!” exclaimed Kandude.

“Ah – the very one,” said the Reverend. “The Squire was respectful and well-schooled in Scriptures but seemed anxious to bring on the End Times himself instead of leaving the exact date to the Lord. He granted us a generous tithe.”

“Though presented as the mistress of the ranch, Sister Zipporah, or Cardoshia as you call her, gave the appearance of being something of a captive,” continued the Reverend. “She managed to stow away in one of the spare serpent boxes. Though my boys noticed the extra weight when we packed up for departure, they uttered not a word, and here she is with us today. Though she has never spoken of her time at the ranch, and did not even share her name, she has been a faithful and inspiring addition to our small ministry.”

After this narrative, Zipporah/Cardoshia began to stir.

“You have a remarkable tradition and enjoy great loyalty, Reverend,” said Morton. “But I confess to being somewhat confused. You preach the most severe consequences for sin, and you and your congregation manifest deep civility and respect for your fellow human beings. And yet you style ex-President TvP a veritable divine son of God, when he is in fact a paragon of duplicity, a felon, and a rapist. And unlike you and the fine people gathered here, he is a man of boundless greed and great cruelty.”

“But,” stammered Kandude, a bit taken aback by Morton’s candor, “one must agree that he is also a hero of capitalism and an engine of prosperity.”

Morton glared a bit at this mitigation, but the Reverend was unperturbed.

“Young gentlemen,” he said quietly. “The ways of the Lord are mysterious. *‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,’* saith the Lord. We have heard these accusations of naivete and hypocrisy. But President TvP stands up for and protects our Christian ways. He defends us against the Antichrists. People that we trust assure that he is there for us.”

Reverend Bedwards spoke further. “The secularists, elites, and intellectuals express disdain for our faith and way of life. They use the term ‘hillbilly’ as an insult and a joke. They deride our Biblical beliefs and practices as primitive, compared to their own sophisticated brands of belief - and disbelief.”

“They think we are poor. And we are. We work for a few dollars a day as pickers, day laborers, junkmen, cooks, dishwashers, housekeepers and handymen when we can find work at all. We work stony little farms to put something on the table.”

“They think we are ignorant. And we are. I have no fancy Doctor of Divinity. Most of this good congregation are lucky if they made it past eighth grade. But we study and honor the word of the Lord. We read our newspapers and pamphlets and share the Good News with those who can’t read so well.”

“They think we are stupid. We are not. We have our remembered library of lore and wisdom, our kinship maps, arts and crafts, music, knowledge of the hills and all that lives in them, our language, and our layers of tradition.”

“They think we are lazy. We are not. We work to survive and keep our people whole every day, doggedly if not well. We dug coal out of these hills for generations, most of the time for little money and all of the time at the expense of our health. We bend our backs and carry our water, doing so as best we can for those who cannot.”

“Life in the hills is hard and beautiful. It is full of poverty. But it is also full of riches, though not the kind hoarded by the wealthy. We have a plague of drugs, delivered here from other places, that is a cancer on our people. And we do our best to treat the cancer. We fear for our children. We fear for our future. We fear for our way of life. But we will never give up on life, faith and family.”

“City folk mock us and our religion. But this religion belongs to us and has been with us for generations. It is a deep part of our way of being in the world. It holds us together in the face of many forces that would tear us apart. It is ours.”

The gathering was quiet except for a few Amens.

Kandude said, “We are honored and humbled to be with you and appreciate your hospitality. We are grateful for your rescue and care of our dear Cardoshia. We have learned much by visiting with you and are the better for it.”

Kandude saw no value in sharing what he had learned about ex-President TvP from Professor Doctor Westmannischer from what seemed so long ago.

During this last, Cardoshia had been staring at Kandude. Suddenly she stood, her eyes clear. “Kandude! How did you find me?” she cried. They embraced. The Reverend, his family, and the elders raised their hands in holy blessing at her miraculous recovery.

Kandude, Cardoshia, and Morton decided to leave that very hour, anxious to exchange news, to discover the fate of the Old Woman, and to contact Tanemahuta. The Reverend and his family hugged Cardoshia and blessed all three on their journey.

As they left the tent, Kandude discreetly put a thousand dollars of his dwindling travel funds into the beat-up old collection box. A collection box that had not once been mentioned during the tent meeting.



CHAPTER XXI CARDOSHIA'S PERILOUS ESCAPE FROM THE AMOROUS SQUIRE

Kandude, Morton, and Cardoshia drove down out of the hills together, stopping at a small county campground where they started a fire and decided to spend the night.

Cardoshia, who had spoken but a few words since regaining her senses, still appeared somewhat dazed. The two men gave her some cheese and peanut butter sandwich crackers and bottled water and sat quietly by. After a while, Cardoshia took a deep breath and, staring into the fire, told her story.

"After the Bulgarians were blown to smithereens, Squire K couldn't very well let us leave the ranch. Nor was it clear he ever intended to, for as the Old Woman had observed, he was quite infatuated with me and was clearly a law unto himself. Initially, he treated me with outward respect, and did not touch me, although I caught him staring through my clothes with voracious eyes whenever he thought I would not notice."

"The Squire gave me a wardrobe of long floral and polka dot dresses and suggested that I take charge of the household. Like the women servants and kitchen staff, I was given several old-fashioned aprons to complement my attire. Unlike the staff, however, I was provided with stylish high heels. It was clear the suggestions and appointments were not optional.

The Squire did not include me in discussions of the Freeman's philosophy or plans. I did, however, preside over dinner with the Squire like a consort. When he retired to his library, I made sure he was supplied with bourbon and cigars. At the end of the day, I made sure his boots and favorite guns were laid out by the side table in the great room. The Freeman, especially Foreman Ruger, watched me like hawks. The staff kept their distance, though Maria was very kind to me."

"My dear friend the Old Woman was sequestered in what they called the Carriage House, where Squire K's father also had an apartment. We spoke whenever we could, but were largely kept apart, for fear, I suppose that the Old Woman might exert inexpedient influence over me. She too rapidly seemed to morph into a traditional frontier matron in appearance, though in our brief interactions she would give me a knowing glance and touch my arm with a gesture meaning that we needed to bide our time. I worry greatly about her."

"The Squire led Bible readings each evening after dinner, often quoting Scripture at great length from memory. I was expected to be reverent and attentive. Indeed, I soon discovered that if I were not exquisitely demure and diligent, the Squire would be visibly displeased. As time went on, Squire K became increasingly critical and controlling. One night he said that the time was soon coming for a betrothal ceremony. He gave me several religious and domestic arts books to read and said something about being Sealed for Eternity. This sounded a lot like some kind of bondage, and not the fun kind. This made me miss my OnlyFans career. I knew I had to do something."

"Then came the visit from the good Reverend Bedwards and his Tent Revival. All but the guards who were on duty attended the services, which were bucketloads more fun than Presbyterianism. Squire K and the soldiers enjoyed the fire and brimstone but were less enthusiastic about the snakes.

The next morning as they were packing up, I noticed a large empty wooden box and climbed in, pulling the cover into place over me. Unfortunately, one of the Reverend's sons, without looking inside, dropped a bundle of snakes in with me and latched down the lid. When the sons opened the box the next night, I was basically catatonic. The snakes were snuggled up in my warm lap. As it happened, the Reverend and his wife and sons

turned out to be kind and gracious people. But I had retreated to a dark place I can't describe. I hardly remember the times that followed until I suddenly recognized you, Kandude."

Kandude and Morton realized that Cardoshia was lucky to be alive, let alone coherent. Kandude thought it a miracle of some kind indeed that he and Cardoshia had been restored to one another, and he entertained consideration that Professor B had been right after all.

The next morning, having filled Cardoshia in on his acquaintance with Tanemahuta but omitting any reference to Changrilalaland, he dug up the burner phone purchased on the advice of Elliot in Idaho, and rang the only number in the memory. Tanemahuta answered on the third ring. Happy to learn that Kandude had found his beloved, Tanemahuta told Kandude that the Old Woman was safe and that they were together. They no longer had the other Subaru, but they could make their way to a Flying Q near Ft. Worth if Kandude was able to meet them there.

The three travelers immediately; headed west. Cardoshia was searching for good road tunes and was forced to try AM at one stretch. On the first station that popped up, the announcer breathlessly welcomed listeners to Liberty Night. The announcer introduced the special guest speaker, the founder and President of Burning Point, Chucky Berzirk.

Chucky Berzirk started by warning mothers to never let their daughters get prescriptions for birth control medication because it makes them angry and bitter and causes them to vote for Donkeycrats. He warned that American universities were oases of left-wing fascism. He said that parents should not send their children to any university except Freedom University in the sacred city of Lynchtree, except that a small number of fundamentalist Christian colleges would be acceptable, if far inferior, second choices. He reminded listeners that Freedom University had online admissions officers standing by 24/7 with exclusive discounts for Liberty Night listeners.

Mr. Berzirk further cautioned about flying on planes with Black pilots, who are given those critical jobs as a sop to DEI instead of hiring smarter and more competent White pilots. Likewise, he warned that one should never get medical care from Black lesbian doctors, who were infiltrating the medical profession. Finally, he warned that Haitian migrants were infiltrating White neighborhoods, snatching people's dogs and cats, barbecuing them in savory Caribbean spices, and eating them with savage relish.

After a few moments of paralysis, Kandude and Cardoshia both reached over to shut off the radio. "This must be a crazy person broadcasting out of his basement, or perhaps a lunatic asylum, on 5 watts," grimaced Kandude.

"On the contrary, dear Kandude," responded Morton. "Chucky Berzirk is a wildly popular right-wing propagandist with millions of followers. He came to our campus when I was teaching at a small college in Missouri on a 3-month contract. He spews out this kind of spurious effluent without the benefit of fact or erudition – indeed, he is a high school graduate who lectures academia, politicians, the clergy and the masses pretending to be a savant of theology and political science. Many students and professors, and especially the school administrators, lapped it all up like starving bloodhounds swilling beef-bacon stew from a trough. A week after his visit, they terminated my contact because I mentioned the Civil War, which made some White students feel bad," Morton added.

"This is what we have come to," said the lugubrious Morton. "There reigns a collective repudiation of intellectual or moral discipline in favor of moronic tropes that feed the basest instincts of the angry mob. Podcasts and social media platforms like X create an infinitude of open mikes for ludicrous conspiracies, groundless claims and accusations, and grotesquely false corruptions of science, history, and news. Worst of all, those who know

better, and therefore bear responsibility for upholding higher standards, plunge willingly into the cesspit for money, fame and power. It is a stampede of intoxicated, principle-free lemmings.”

Late in the evening, the travelers arrived at the Flying Q near Ft. Worth where they had a warm reunion and mutual introductions. They sat together in the all-night truck stop café to bring one another up to date.



CHAPTER XXII THE OLD WOMAN'S DELICATE PREDICAMENT AT FREEMEN RANCH

The Old Woman reported that she, like Cardoshia, became a virtual prisoner at Freeman Ranch. In a decidedly mixed blessing, Squire Kannon's father, Squire Klyden, took a shine to her, sniffing after her like an old goat in rut. Squire Klyden was a more deeply embittered and significantly cruder version of his martial scion. Playing a dangerous game, the Old Woman reached even farther back in time than Squire K required of Cardoshia. She dressed up in pioneer women clothes, including sun bonnets and button-down shoes, exercised subtle Victorian flirtations, and led the old goat around as if by a carrot on a string.

She kept up the carriage house in exquisite order and made sure the Squire Klyden got his tonics, his Jack Daniels, and his Red Man tobacco pouches, taking care to find vintage stock of the latter to circumvent his fury about politically correct rebranding. Squire Klyden began taking her out for picnics in his rusty old blue and white F100, but always inside the ranch. Never did the watchful Freeman let them out of their sight, frustrating her plans to simply carjack the lusty relic. She knew she could easily take him, but the armed zealots were another matter. Fortunately, the old goat passed out each night before the late-rising sap of the ancient bristlecone might overcome the twin impediments of dotage and drunkenness.

"Things seemed to be at a vexing impasse," said the Old Woman, "but then a hero arrived in the third act." She beamed at Tanemahuta.

Tanemahuta picked up the narrative from his end. "Once I accepted the mission to scope out the Freeman ranch, I recalled the vivid story you shared with me, Kandude, and studied up. No stranger to code switching, I traded the Subaru for an old Chevy pickup and got some appropriate duds and an ironic MAWA ballcap. I picked up a used Taurus 9MM at a gun show and collected some patriot literature. I contrived to run into a couple of the Freeman at bars in Abilene, where a few of the more imaginative boys were able to overcome their instinctive loathing of a giant brown native with face tattoos in light of my avowed enthusiasm for overthrowing the government. I claimed I was a Hawaiian cowboy who had been thrown off my kindly White employer's ranch and cheated of my cowboy heritage by bureaucrats and real estate developers. Even the haters were fascinated by the story of the Hawaiian cattle ranching tradition.

"A couple of the boys invited me back to the ranch, where Squire K, though interested in my story, was skeptical. At his direction, Foreman Ruger gave me the worst jobs on the ranch, and I spent long days mucking out horse stables, pumping septic tanks, and carrying heavy loads around in the People's Rights Armory. The men were amazed that I could lift as much as any two of them."

"The turning point came when four of the biggest haters jumped me one night on the way to the decrepit out-building where I was bunking. Unfortunately for them, those bad boys knew nothing of Māori warriors. But they found out. I left them in a quivering heap in front of the People's Rights Armory, tied down by a cargo net. The Squire, impressed, assigned the badly beaten wretches to excrement duty, and assigned me to the corral. Though my rodeo days are long over, I was better than the young top hands in managing the horses, especially breaking. I took personal charge of the Squires' rebellious stallion, Weisser Blitz. I was in."

"It didn't take long for me to spot the Old Woman," said Tanemahuta. "I saw her out and about with the ancient Pappy, and now and again on the porch. The issue was how to make contact. She might not conclude that a tattooed Māori insurrectionist might be a friend."

The Old Woman took up the story. "It had become my habit to take a bit of air on the porch of the carriage house each night after the old goat passed out. Not incidentally, this provided the chance to study the patterns of the night watch, though no opportunities to sneak out suggested themselves. One night, a quiet voice spoke to me from the shadows. "Old Woman - I am Kandude's friend. I am here to help you escape." I had a bit of a start when a living object the size of Rhode Island moved to the edge of the shadows, and that is how I met the warrior Tanemahuta."

The two shared everything they had learned about the movements and security measures of Freeman Ranch. One moonless night at 3 in the morning, Tanemahuta tied two horses to a clump of trees not far from the back of the carriage house. The Old Woman, using the old bed sheet with knots trick, let herself out the second story window and to the ground. Tanemahuta was waiting below to catch her for the last drop of several feet.

The Old Woman and Tanemahuta quietly led the horses for half a mile before mounting and making their way through the darkest pathways through the ranch, which Tanemahuta had scouted over many a night. They evaded the surveillance cameras and sneaked out beyond the fence line in a remote corner of the ranch between the comings and goings of the perimeter night riders.

As it happened, the Old Woman had had a minor part in a B western in her Hollywood days, and could ride a horse well enough. They rode far beyond the neighboring ranches and finally stopped at a farmhouse, where the Old Woman was able to call her old lover in Ft. Worth. The long-retired oil man, delighted to have a visit from his colorful past, picked them up in his Range Rover and put them up in one of the condo's he still kept in Ft. Worth, unknown to his lovely wife, who was Miss Oil Derrik 2003.

The retired oil man and the Old Woman had a nostalgic reunion. The Old Woman declined his gallant offer to renew their past amities, reminding him that sweet remembrance was the best of old amours. The courtly old gentleman had dropped them off, not without some misgivings, at the Flying Q.

The five friends reflected on their many travels and travails, and the lessons they had learned in political science, history and religion. They talked about the border conflict, the Freeman Ranch, and events in the Holy Land.

Morton, the only scholar and intellectual among them, spoke. "Even with the low expectations life has brought me, I am increasingly perplexed by what I see and hear. This is a country whose largest part professes devotion to Jesus, a figure who rejected material wealth and power. It seems terribly ironic that vast numbers of his professed disciples have welded together a nominal worship of Jesus, blind allegiance to a political identity, a merciless ardor for theocracy, an oxymoronic conflation of capitalism and spiritualism, and an appetite for absolutism into a single ideological construct. Moreover, these true believers have attached themselves to a mortal idol who is the antithesis of the Christ figure."

This is the malignant stuff of religious wars from which our first colonists and founders sought escape and reinvention, the surmounting of which was the main object and achievement of the Enlightenment. Indeed, this twisted orthodox cult is a betrayal of the lessons of Jesus, whether you believe that he is God, man, or inspirational fable. The amalgam of religious materialism, theocracy, and will to power is an insult to the founders of America, to the engineers of progress who advanced, however imperfectly, civil rights, justice and equality for the last 250 years, and to the men and women who died in the defense of democracy."



CHAPTER XXIII HOW THE FRIENDS UNDERTOOK A DEBT OF HONOR

The next morning, after a night recovering in the modest motel, the five friends got together for a late brunch. The Old Woman said, "I know we have much to sort out, but I have been entrusted by my old lover with an important task. We owe him much for my extrication from the pickle at Freeman Ranch, and I cannot bear to refuse him. Though he must urgently repair to Poughkeepsie to see an old friend on his deathbed, he asked me to personally deliver this ivory Chinese puzzle box containing a thumb drive to his close friend and fellow oligarch, Kellen Tuskboar, at a small town right here in Texas."

All instantly recognized the name of this Uber-Titan of the Plutosphere. Indeed, Cardoshia's father, in his past heyday, had personally known the trillionaire Tuskboar, although of course these days the destitute P-M would be utterly undetectable by the retina of the Great Man.

Great Man Kellen Tuskboar was rich and famous for constructing an extensible space elevator connecting Pismo Beach to the Tycho crater on the moon; perfecting and mass producing scalable fusion reactors capable of powering everything from a mobility scooter to a megalopolis, and deploying the Global Illuminati Flux Reticulum (GIFR), which interconnects every electronic device in the solar system, extracting all data, enslaving all programming, and subjecting each to the will of the Master of the Universe.

Kandude and the others immediately consented to this detour. As it happened, the small town was only a few hours to the South. On their way they stopped at a fruit and vegetable outlet featuring a cornucopia of farm fresh produce and numerous tourist sundries. Gathering up their finds, they made their way to a makeshift check stand, which was operated by an extensively disabled one-eyed man in a wheelchair.

Kandude noticed that a burly overseer kept an eagle eye on the beleaguered cashier, whacking him heartily about the head and shoulders when he failed to execute transactions to his satisfaction. Oddly, when remonstrating the poor cripple for his incompetency, he sarcastically referred to him as "Professor." Though terribly disfigured, the maimed lackey seemed oddly familiar to Kandude.

Kandude turned to Cardoshia, nudging her and nodding toward the miserable purser. "If I had not seen our beloved Professor B crushed to a pulp by a monster truck in the desert, I might think it were he ringing up the fruits and vegetables," he said. At the name of Professor B, the paraplegic wretch uttered a loud cry, spilling the contents of the cash box onto the ground. The veggie boss commenced a renewed beating of the disfigured creature.

"Stop! Stop, sir!" cried Kandude. "I will cover all damages and inconvenience, and purchase a generous bundle of your wares besides."

"What? Is it you Kandude?" said the wreck of his once lively and cavalier Professor.

"Well, is this the great philosopher, still among the living?" asked Morton, coming up behind.

"You, brutal vender," said Kandude, "this man, a learned professor and champion of pure capitalism, will leave your humiliating employ and come with us immediately."

"So you say," replied the cruel overseer, cudgel in hand. This was a man obviously used to exerting great authority over his abject plebians. "Well, he isn't really in a position to do that."

Kandude stepped up to face him, with Tanemahuta coming swiftly to his side. At the sight of the intimidating Māori warrior, the sadistic supervisor fell back a step. The diminutive Morton stepped in between them.

“Is this man your serf, your bondsman, your indentured servant?” he demanded. “This is America! While it is true that here employers have the power to overwork and underpay their employees, to find infinite ways to avoid providing health insurance, to discard them the moment they become ill or injured, to work them in warehouses and fields without proper respite, safety equipment, and sanitation, and to boot them at will in favor of the next desperate working stiff waiting to suffer capitalistic servitude because they have children to feed. Still, in America. a man or woman still may stand up and quit. This distinguished professor has cashed out his last kumquat for you, fruit stand bully. Count yourself lucky for avoiding proper justice for abusing a disabled man.”

Kandude, Tanemahuta, Cardoshia, and the Old Woman looked at the slight but suddenly formidable Morton with astonishment. The petty tyrant shrank back, cringing at Morton’s rebuke. The friends wheeled Professor B over to the Subaru, levered him into the back seat, put his wheelchair in the back along with the compact and flexible Morton, and drove to the next small town where they traded the Subaru in for a capacious used Suburban.



CHAPTER XXIV THEY MEET THE MOST BRILLIANT MAN IN THE UNIVERSE

The six travelers continued south to Egotopia, the wholly owned private municipality of the Uber-Titan Tuskboard.

En route, Professor B explained that, on that fateful night in the desert, instant death had been averted by a sandy depression beneath the truck that rolled over onto him. Though his lower spine was crushed, heroic EMTs saved his life. After extensive rehabilitation, social services connected him with Leviathan AgroPlex, Inc., and the job opportunity at the fruit and vegetable stand where they had found him. Professor B expressed his undying gratitude for his rescue, his delight to meet new friends, and great joy to see both his beloved students Kandude and Cardoshia alive and well.

Arriving at the gates of Egotopia, the travelers were met by polite guards who asked for their ID and inquired of their business. After a quick phone call, the security captain took retinal scans of each visitor, issued picture ID cards, and made them sign non-disclosure agreements prohibiting them from ever revealing anything they saw, heard or experienced during the visit.

They were given an information packet that explained that Egotopia was an autonomous jurisdiction, and that within its boundaries no federal, state or local authorities applied. Scanning the packet quickly, Morton asked the captain how such extralegal status could be possible, but the captain simply raised his eyes skyward and smiled.

An escort vehicle led them through an expansive grid of modest, cookie-cutter homes. Working from the center out, assembly line style crews were erecting what appeared to be hundreds of homes. At one circular intersection there was a massive, casually roped off hole in the ground, but no indication of its purpose. There were no informational or “for sale” signs anywhere.

They arrived at a very small house with what appeared to be a fusion-powered titanium SWAT assault vehicle parked in the driveway. The escort walked directly up to the front entry, opened the door and waved the six travelers in.

There, in front of a giant white board covered with elaborate drawings, complicated formulas, and technical terminology, stood the Great Man. He did not acknowledge their entrance. However, two attractive assistants welcomed them and offered them seats at a large table.

Atop the table was a diorama of the planned municipality of Egotopia. It showed rows of houses, playgrounds, surveillance towers, company stores, and a large network of subsurface tunnels with tiny model cars zooming around at high speeds.

There were no pictures or items of personal significance in the small living room. When the assistants brought them drinks, Kandude could see there was nothing in the refrigerator except Diet Coke. He did notice several real estate flyers advertising multi-million-dollar mega mansions on the kitchen counter.

The Great Man finally turned from the white board and scanned his visitors, exhibiting no sign of recognition or interest. That is, until his eyes lit on Cardoshia, at which time his pupils dilated and his nostrils flared.

All save the Old Woman were a bit nonplussed by this rather gelid encounter. The Old Woman, surprised by nothing that men do, stepped forward, and said in a melodious voice, “I have brought you something of importance from the First Oil Baron of Ft. Worth, the Potentate of the Permian, the Sultan of Shale Oil, the Pharaoh of Fracking.”

At this, the Great Tuskboar came to life. "Ah, a sense of humor!" said he. "I could use you in my Labor Relations Department, which at the moment has no staff since there is really nothing to do."

He reached out and held open his hand, requiring the Old Woman to actually close the distance and hand him the ivory Chinese puzzle box. He put it in his pocket without thanking her.

Waving his hand across the diorama, the small living space, and the picture window toward the view of the neighborhood, he said, "You have entered the freest place in America. Here we have no regulations, no unions, no taxes, and no journalists.

"Here I am free," he continued. "No material possessions, no rooms full of furniture, no labyrinthine mansion. Things are a burden to the soul, and I have renounced them. People who disagree with my transcendent genius are an impediment to sublime achievement, and I have renounced them. But I place exquisite value on the infinite variety of human expression. Indeed, free speech and expression of self are absolute rights which must never be trammelled, unless it is through a medium that I control or plan to control."

The lovely personal assistants nodded affirmatively at these statements.

"At last! cried Professor B. "This is the best of all capitalistic worlds; a crucible of unfettered human potential; a wellspring of progress and prosperity, a paradise for Prometheus unbound!"

Philosopher Morton spoke up. "Mr. Tuskboar, are you saying that you have carved out an exempt enclave within the borders of the United States, in which you may do whatever you want, without regulation and accountability, and in which you are relieved of the tax obligations that any other American must pay to maintain governance, services, and civil order?"

The Great Tuskboar looked coldly at the little philosopher.

"I am not an 'other American,'" he said. "It may be true that I have not yet fully cast off the yoke of unnecessary and wasteful regulation, which by definition infringes upon my freedom and curbs the limitless potential of my genius. But here within the boundaries of my own Egotopia I have negotiated exclusion from bureaucrats and their vexing harassment. I provide my own services and build what I want to the consummate specifications dictated by me alone. Egotopia neither pays nor levies taxes. Surrounding jurisdictions have nothing to complain about, for they grow fat on the transactions of the tens of thousands fortunate enough to work for me."

"As for the supposed authorities, such as the U.S. government, who still impose unjust taxes and regulations on me, I say this: I may live in this country, but I am not of this country. The great producers, the rightful trustees of the planet's riches, are citizens of a different empire, one without geographic boundaries or obsolete cultural loyalties. In this large and variegated world, there exist many regimes that are not California, and which are happy to enjoy the tenancy of my many parts."

"Regarding the U.S. government's efforts to take what is rightfully mine through the exercise of abusive tax authority, thereby essentially stealing my many gifts from future generations – I'm working on that with my good friend Tantor von Pyubengrabbler. Stop the steal!" He smirked, pleased with his own wit.

Kandude asked, "you said you have banished unions here in Egotopia, sir. Are your employees happy and well, and do they share your remarkable freedoms?"

"They are the most fortunate workers on the planet, young man," said the Great Tuskboar. "Perhaps you could be one of them if you are significantly above average in intelligence, capable of absolute loyalty and obedience,

willing to work in extremis every moment for 100+ hours a week, forswear any concerns about workplace hazards and viral illnesses, and have an infinite capacity for criticism and abuse.”

“You see,” continued the Great Tuskboar, “I am the first cause of opportunities to work on the most meaningful and exciting projects in the world. I am the Creator. I provide vision and exactitude. I procreate *raison d’etre* each and every day. In return, all that I ask is that my people dedicate every fiber of their being to the achievement of my goals at any cost. These are my ideas, my projects, my factories and my properties. Without me, there is nothing. I have no time for whiners, slackers, unionists, dissidents, leftists, immigrants who don’t qualify for an O-1A visa and won’t sign a highly restrictive employment contract with me, and the millions of people who cast fraudulent votes for Marxists and liberal sympathizers. If one doesn’t want to do The Great Work, one may go elsewhere and be damned.”

Cardoshia, who invariably avoided politics, analytical dialogue, and conflict, timidly spoke up. “Mr. Tuskboar, you are clearly the most brilliant industrialist in the history of the planet. My father, a devotee of Ayn Rand and formerly a billionaire, always spoke highly of you.”

Kellon Tuskboar, who until now gave soliloquy without concern for the reactions or thoughts of his audience, suddenly paid close attention to the very demure, very mindful Cardoshia, whose person contained many charms.

“Would you not, dear sir, get more productivity, imagination, and loyalty from your employees if you treated them with dignity and respect, rather than as tools of production?” she inquired.

The Great Tuskboar reddened and swelled like giant puff adder. “When a prime mover, an apex capitalist, a superior man, sends a spaceship to Uranus, does he trouble his head with whether the mice on board are at their ease or not? You question my omnipotence? You challenge my infallibility?”

The Great Tuskboar bared his teeth, shook his head, and made a guttural grunting sound. “I am a free speech absolutist!” he snorted. “You, like anybody else on the planet, can say anything you want, a right I will defend with my wealth, my power, and my life. Except when you say something I don’t like when you are in my private municipality, on my monopolistic and arbitrary communication platforms, or within reach of my global surveillance systems. Or when in any of my continuously monitored fusion-powered SWAT vehicles, or in the offices of corporations that I own, or in countries that I have purchased anywhere on the planet.”

The Great Tuskboar was now almost gasping with anger in fearsome contrast to his earlier wry and insouciant demeanor. He glowered at Cardoshia.

“I am ordering all of your personal devices disabled and their data assimilated, you luscious but treacherous harpy, as well as those of your companions. This order is being implemented instantly even as I utter the words, because most of the electronic instruments on the planet are actually my own private Alexas, only way smarter and attuned to my every command 24/7. I am putting you all on my personal blacklist, which I will merge with my good friend Tantor von Pyubengrabbler’s blacklist in due time.”

He pointed at the group of friends, his eyes snapping. “Off with you! And be grateful that my good friend Tantor and I have not quite yet forged the perfect and beautiful order of tomorrow, in which foolish and inferior subversives will swiftly get the fates they deserve. As for you, impertinent but bodacious mademoiselle, I will give you a child and will protect your friends with my life, should you ever, repentant and inflamed with desire, come to recognize me for who I am.”

The six friends were swiftly escorted out of Egotopia. At loose ends, they made their way to the interstate and stopped at the Flying Q for refreshment and consultation.



CHAPTER XXV A CRITICAL DECISION POINT AND DIVERGENT EXCURSIONS

As they walked through the parking lot of the Flying Q, Kandude saw a familiar looking big rig. Though he thought it could not be possible, he could not help himself from foolishly hoping as they entered the 24/7 Truckstop Cafe. To his amazement and joy he saw the friendly trucker, whose name was or was not Briar. He or she simultaneously spotted Kandude, rushing over to embrace him, as well as Cardoshia and the Old Woman. He or she also warmly acknowledged Tanemahuta, whom he or she remembered from the fateful shipwreck of the Minnow Too.

They all sat together and Briar told his or her story. Clinging to a chunk of flotsam for almost two days after the fearsome storm subsided, he or she was rescued by a fishing boat somewhere off Vancouver Island. Briar was convinced that all of his or her sailing companions were dead, a fear in large part confirmed when he or she returned to Seattle and discovered that his or her special friend Daphne and the Skipper were reported missing at sea and rescue efforts since called off. Having no choice but to make a living, Briar picked up his or her truck and returned to the road.

Making no mention of Changrilalaland, Kandude and Tanemahuta filled Briar in on their adventures after surviving the tragic shipwreck.

After catching up, they decided to use the restrooms and consider next steps. Morton returned to the table clutching a flyer from the bulletin board, which boards he always searched for announcements of adjunct faculty and tutoring opportunities.

The flyer announced a seminar by the eminent scholar Istvan Lavendar that very night at the academic subsidiary of one of Texas' most prestigious college football teams. Distinguished Professor Lavender, a scholar of the Human Mind at one of the mightiest universities on the planet, was famous for his charismatic and compelling arguments for the brilliance of human progress and the case for optimism about the future. His best-selling books included *Angels Kick Demon Ass* and *The Dark Ages Are Dead, Baby*.

The great city of Austin was not far. Both Morton and Professor B were excited about the opportunity to hear and engage this famous potentate of positivity, and to advance their own lively debate about the human condition. Of course, Professor B was a great fan, but mildly critical of the Distinguished Professor Lavender's failure to assign enough weight to capitalism as the central manifestation of evolutionary psychology and the dominant factor in human progress. Morton, on the other hand, opined that the Distinguished Professor Lavender was suffering from a congenital delusion of selective optimism, that he used questionable measures of human progress, and that he selected data and statistics in a way that was the very definition of confirmation bias.

Kandude was enthusiastic about joining the two philosophers at the Lavender seminar. Cardoshia and the Old Woman were excited about getting tickets to Austin City Limits Live. Tanemahuta said that he was their friend for life, but must now return to his own country to fight for Māori rights. Briar said that he or she had to continue his or her delivery run to Florida but would catch up with any and all wherever they ended up as he or she crisscrossed the country. The friends each bought a burner phone at the Flying Q trucker mart and logged in one another's numbers. The earlier phones were now literal burners; Kellen Tuskboar had toasted them as promised and they smelled of burned electronics.

After warm hugs all around, Briar jumped into his or her truck and got back on the big road. The others dropped Tanemahuta off at airport terminal with best wishes and commitments to stay in touch. Kandude and the two philosophers dropped the ladies off at Moody Amphitheater.

The three men found their way to the famous football stadium, left the Suburban in the Third Down parking lot, found Crackback Hall, and made their way to the Extra Point lecture hall.

When they arrived, the Extra Point lecture hall was crowded, and there was a faint buzz, but Distinguished Professor Lavender was nowhere to be seen. Kandude and Morton pushed Professor B into a wheelchair bay in the back of the hall and took a couple of the few remaining seats nearby. They could see officials in line judge suits scurrying around and making calls. After about twenty minutes the crowd was growing restless, many people resorting to their cellphones and a few getting up to leave. Then, a distinguished looking man in a formal striped referee's uniform came up to the microphone.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "I am very sorry to say that we have somehow lost tonight's distinguished guest. He was with us for the faculty reception in the Linebacker Lounge, during which he looked a bit indisposed, but assured us that he was fine. Just prior to commencing this seminar, one of the prestigious Most Valuable Player series, Distinguished Professor Lavender excused himself. We have not seen him since. Please accept our sincere apologies. We will issue rain checks for all admission and parking tickets at the Bootleg Booth near the main entrance."

There was a collective groan. People began to shuffle out of the lecture hall. Kandude and Morton, aware that navigation with Professor B's wheelchair would be a little awkward, waited until the place had emptied out. As they made their way to the main exit, admiring the many life-size photos of past football heroes lining the now empty hallway, they heard a low sobbing sound emanating from one of the classrooms with the door slightly ajar. Concerned, Morton quietly pushed open the door.

There, hunched over a desk, face in hands, was the cheerful scholar, instantly recognizable from his book jacket photos, website glam shot, and the numerous seminar posters arrayed throughout Crackback Hall, except that he now appeared to be crying.

Kandude took a few ginger steps toward the distressed harbinger of hope. "Distinguished professor - are you alright?" he asked. "Is there anything we can do for you?"

Distinguished Professor Lavender gave a start, looking up at his three visitors. "Well," he said. "I'm sorry you had to see this," said the Clarion of Kaizen. "If you were here for the seminar celebrating the inexorable ascent of civilization, I must apologize."

Morton said, "We were indeed here for the seminar, Professor, and we are all three somewhat familiar with your work, though I for one beg to differ with your analysis and conclusions. Nonetheless, there are times when events overtake the man, and he must be excused from his appointments, a respect we would all wish to be accorded."

"Thank you for your kindness," said Distinguished Professor Lavender. "You see, gentlemen, I could not bring myself to give this seminar tonight. It has been my life's work to explore the better angels of man's nature, to measure the upward trajectory of human progress, to celebrate the triumph of rationality and morality over violence, hate, stupidity, sectarianism, exploitation, war, slavery, discrimination, and the mean-spirited

degradation of others. I did not think myself totally naïve – one would be a complete fool not to see that human progress ebbs and flows, and there are often catastrophic regressions in the human journey.”

Professor Lavender continued after moment’s pause. “I truly believed the eloquent words of Doctor Martin Luther King: *‘The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.’* But as I look around me these past few years in America, I struggle to believe them still.”

By this time Kandude and Morton had taken chairs, and along with Professor B, they gave the suffering Distinguished Professor their attentive regard.

“In our country these past several years, I see a vast segment of the populace idolizing and yearning to be led by a bloviating liar with the emotional maturity of a raging toddler, the intellect of a cane toad, the business ethics of a Mafia boss, the governing instincts of a fascist, and the morals of a sexual predator.

“Multitudes have enthusiastically joined a mass orgy of racism, hatred and shameless denigration of those over whom they demand economic and religious domination, and regarding whom they advocate marginalization, disenfranchisement, and even expulsion. By the tens of millions, they celebrate the degrading of principles and institutions of government which were created by an enlightened revolution at great cost, and whose stability and integrity have long been the envy of the world.”

“When I observe the state of the public dialogue, I weep,” said the Distinguished Professor. “Liars, conspiracy theorists, narcissists, nihilists, bigots, power seekers, petty terrorists compensating for disappointed lives, and idiots flood the anarchic media with ignorant and hateful sewage in volumes so great that truth, integrity, and basic human decency are in danger of being drowned.

“And then,” said the Distinguished Professor, “there are the charlatans who don the vestments of actual professions. Dramatic actors masquerading as journalists, pretending to deliver real news and sagacious commentary, but who lie about climate change, crime, immigration, insurrection, and election results, without a shred of regard for the pollution of the collective consciousness or the common good. They gleefully pimp this melodramatic cack, prancing, preening, grimacing and crowing without a scintilla of shame. They know this rubbish isn’t true. They also know that a great many in their audience don’t know it isn’t true.

“They wrap themselves in the flag and style themselves as heroic defenders of the forgotten, the God-fearing, the disrespected common man and woman. They bask in the studio lights, the applause, and ‘likes’ on X, TikTok, Facebook and Instagram, and relish the outrage of their critics. They defend themselves against accountability by arguing that only idiots would believe anything they say, thereby revealing what they really think about their audience.”

“These belligerent quacks watch those who caterwaul from further out on the moronic tail of the bell-shaped curve, the ones who create incendiary entertainments around the murders of elementary school children, fictitious killing of newborn babies, invented killing and eating of pets by immigrants, and the origins of tragic terrorist attacks. Many of these stories are much beloved by The Great Idol. Like dope peddlers who add fentanyl to street heroin, these cosplay journalists suck these pernicious fever dreams into their own carnival shows the moment their own schtick is no longer potent enough to give their junkies a good enough high. This because they dare not lose market share, their sole measure of merit and the fuel pump of their massive egos, their illicit status, and their inflated paychecks. Thus, do they pull more and more people deeper and deeper into the conflagration of rancor, fear and idiocracy.”

“In the meantime, the ethically unencumbered ideologues and apparatchiks advancing the campaign to take over the country brazenly plot to pervert democracy and the machinery of government. Elected officials amplify this filthy hogwash and embrace obstruction over any modicum of decent dialogue, desecrating the halls of democracy and justice in order to claw their way into the vortex of absolute power.”

The beleaguered Distinguished Professor paused for a few moments before continuing.

“Rationality and humanism are everywhere in disorganized retreat. I am terrified that what we are witnessing is not a setback, but a rout. The social and political landscape is descending toward a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night.”

The men fell silent, the only sound being the distant harmony of the glorious football team’s fight song playing 24/7 on the football stadium speakers.

“I study evolutionary psychology,” Distinguished Professor Lavender finally said. “What I see before us is the threat of mass self-extinction. I have decided to join the Carthusian monks.”

The little philosopher Morton, himself no Pollyanna, leaned forward and gently placed a hand on the Professor Lavendar’s forearm. “Distinguished Professor, you have given much to the world in terms of scholarship, intelligent disquisition, and hope, however tenuous the last. You have been a seeker of truth, and we wish you very well in this difficult world. I must only say this one thing about the human condition. The marketplace for truth is infinitely smaller than any of us would like to believe.”

The three men left the Distinguished Professor to reflect upon his future at a silent monastery. They picked up the ladies at the end of a glorious ACL concert and repaired to rooms at a modest motel to recover from the day’s events before figuring out what was next.



CHAPTER XXVI THE CONCLUSION

In the morning, the friends decided that it would be wise to get some financial and strategic advice. Kandude advised Cardoshia and the Old Woman that he, Morton, and Tanemahuta had met an honest banker in Kansas, a location whose attractions included not being in Texas. They got on the interstate and headed north to the Corn State. As they made their way out of Texas, Kandude addressed himself to Professor B.

“My dear Professor B,” he said, “I am curious. After you were evicted, mugged, nearly killed by fire, flood and landslide, crushed by a monster truck, and, while a paraplegic, abused by a petty tyrant, did you always continue to believe that everything happens for the best?”

“I am still of my first opinion,” answered Professor B, “for I am a philosopher, and cannot retract, especially as my economic hero Armand Laughher, and his precedent Colossi Friedrich and Milton can never be wrong. Besides, the pre-established harmony is the best thing in the world, and so are their principles of spontaneous order and limitless individual liberty.”

As they were driving along a remote stretch of Kansas highway not far north of the Panhandle, they rounded a bend and there suddenly saw an overturned pickup crushed and smoking on the southbound lanes of the road.

Kandude screeched the Suburban to a halt and all but Professor B jumped out of the car and rushed up to the smoldering wreck. An old man was trapped upside down in the ancient upended pickup truck. He was groaning and feebly flapping an arm out the window. Kandude and Morton reached in to lift the old man out but were thwarted by the jammed seatbelt. The Old Woman reached into her purse and produced a switchblade, deftly snapped it open, and reached through to slice the seatbelt in a trice.

Gently but swiftly, they levered the old man out of the cab and carried him away from the wreck, as gasoline fumes filled the air. They laid him carefully in the grass on the shoulder of the road near the Suburban. Looking behind, they saw a flame licking the trail of gasoline along the trajectory of the crash. The old man, conscious now, saw the same thing. “Hopkins!” he cried. “My dog, my Hopkins is in there.”

Without a moment’s hesitation, Kandude bounded across the median and dove into the inverted cab of the truck headfirst, his feet scrabbling for purchase in the glass strewn dirt. They heard a bark, and within seconds, Kandude emerged from the crushed cab holding a stunned basset hound in his arms. He bolted away from the wreck just as it burst into flames, and laid the whimpering dog next to its battered master. The old man patted the canine, gratefully gripped Kandude’s hand, and then faded into unconsciousness.

They put the comatose old man and the quivering dog carefully in the Suburban and called 911, alerting the clinic in the next small town to the situation. On arrival, a doctor and her team, a nurse and an aide, who all three together comprised the entire medical staff, were waiting at the entrance. They quickly checked out the old man, strapped him onto a backboard and wheeled him into the clinic on a gurney. They made an advance call to the nearest veterinarian, and gave the friends directions.

Kandude and Morton raced to the vet’s office, which was in his large frame house, while the others stayed at the clinic with the old man. The friends stood vigil at both clinics for both man and beast. Soon enough, the doctor sent the old man off in an ambulance to a bigger town with a Level III trauma center.

The friends spent the night at a modest bed and breakfast run by the doctor's husband. The next morning, they checked on Hopkins. Assured that he was stable and certain to recover, they drove 50 miles to the bigger town with the trauma center.

When they arrived, the old man was still unconscious, albeit sewn up from emergency surgery and drugged to the gills. They sought out the attending physician, who inquired as to whether they were family. The Old Woman, who had wisely gone through the old man's wallet during the prior day's race to the clinic, said that she was his cousin from Topeka. She had seen in the wallet a well-worn piece of paper with handwritten names and phone numbers, the top entry of which was "Iris" beside which was written "RIP" with a little heart. Seeing no other visitors, the Old Woman thought that this was a humane white lie, and one which might facilitate the friends being there for an old man who was injured and alone.

The doctor, though amusedly skeptical of the Old Woman's consanguinity, was kind but grave. He said that old fellow had an aortic aneurysm, which had been traumatized in the accident, and could succumb at any moment. The friends returned to the B&B in the smaller village for the night.

The next morning, after excellent bacon scrambles, fresh fruit bowls, and homemade cinnamon rolls, they went to the vet's to check on Hopkins. The basset hound wagged his happiness to see them, especially Kandude, but was anxiously looking at the door for his master. The only sign of his ordeal was a bandage on one of his front legs. The veterinarian, one Phil Butler, said with a slight grin that they could call him Dr. Phil, but discouraged them from sharing any domestic conflicts or he would be forced to give them severely condescending advice and send them off to bootcamp. He reported that Hopkins appeared to be fine.

"Looks like the little fellow took quite a bump on the head, he has perked up a lot this morning. He's ready to go, but no wrestling or long walks for a while," advised Dr. Phil. The friends exchanged glances, then Cardoshia gave Hopkins a hug, took the leash, and headed out, femme and fido, for the Suburban. Kandude paid the bill.

When they got to the hospital, the old man was awake and alert, though hooked up to all sorts of beeping and flashing equipment. There were red tags on his status board, chart, and wristband. Having been told that Hopkins was an emotional support dog, the doctor pretended not to notice the canine at all. Soon man and dog were reunited, Cardoshia laughingly trying to shush Hopkins' excited barking. Brazenly violating numerous hospital rules, the faithful dog lay on the bed with his head on old man's shoulder.

Speaking in a soft but clear voice, the old man thanked the friends warmly for coming to his rescue and gave Kandude a remarkably firm handshake as he thanked him for saving his beloved Hopkins.

"I'm 95 years old," he said. "I was making a trip to Texas to see an old friend from High School, we being the last two survivors of a class of only nine who came up together in an old country schoolhouse in Dubuque County, Iowa. Dodged a deer and crashed my good old Chevy pickup just before you came around the bend, thank the Lord.

"Hopkins, by the way, is named after Harry Hopkins, a favorite son of the Corn State, who with the great President Franklin D Roosevelt helped save our small family farm. I am the third-generation owner, and soon to be the last. Twenty acres but not a single mule," he grinned, patting his hound.

"I don't know what's to become of Hopkins now," said the old man. The friends all glanced at one another. "Yes, I know I am about to meet my maker. I've had 80 years of cultivating the farm and helping my neighbors, 70 years married to a beautiful woman, 60 years driving my old Chevy pickup, and ten years with my faithful Hopkins.

Hopkins is basically my family now. My lovely Iris is several years gone. Our son died in Vietnam long ago, just a teenager, full of vinegar and eager to defend his country.

Save to vote for the successors of FDR, I never troubled my head about affairs of the nation's capital, nor those of Wall Street, nor those of Hollywood. All in all, it has been a good life. I am ready. My only regret is that I am not in a position to invite you to the county fair," he said to the Old Woman. "I know all the judges and can usually get my hooks on the blue-ribbon strawberry rhubarb pies."

The Old Woman smiled warmly.

"I have a proposition, or perhaps call it a last request," continued the old man. "I know nothing of you five friends, except that you are brave, helpful, and kind to dogs. You interrupted your journey to take care of my beloved Hopkins and be here for a dying old man."

"I want to leave my farm to you, Kandude, to share with your excellent friends. If it proves not to be of use to you good friends, you may sell it to someone who loves the good earth and take some small profit. The house is old, but large and comfortable; the soil is deep and fertile; the machinery is antique but well cared for. Of course, Hopkins is included in this bequest."

Kandude and the other four protested vigorously, abjuring any shred of worthiness or propriety. The old man stood firm, and Hopkins gave them a look full of meaning and affection. The erudite Professor B, who possessed a law degree and was qualified to practice in many states, drafted an impeccable will, one perfectly enforceable in both Kansas and Iowa. He asked that the kindly doctor and the excellent nurse sign as witnesses, also requesting that the doctor execute a brief addendum confirming that the old man was of sound mind, despite his broken body.

The old farmer signed the will, and with a satisfied look proclaimed that he was content. He thanked the friends and wished them the best, gave Hopkins a pat on the head, and died. Hopkins howled but no one lifted a hand to stay his expression of canine grief.

Arrangements were made. A couple of days later, at the small family bank in Kansas, Mr. Bailey greeted the friends warmly, caught up on recent events, and, taking into account the unexpected bequest, outlined a sensible plan. He was sorry to learn, but not surprised, that the principal corpus of their erstwhile fortune had fallen prey to ransomware but expressed confidence that with prudent husbandry of the modest remaining funds, use of the farm, and their own great natural talents, he expected that they would be successful in their endeavors. He hooked them up with a trustworthy old friend in Cedar Rapids upon whom they could rely for settlement of their new property in and their other financial affairs.

The two-story farmhouse the old man had left them had a classic wrap-around porch and many rooms. It was neat and comfortable, and contained all necessities, but luxuries none at all. The barn contained a great deal of vintage equipment and had an extensive workshop. The neatly managed acreage contained a small apple orchard and was in other parts fallow, in parts in corn, and in parts in cover.

As they drove up Kandude stopped the Suburban in the driveway and looked around. "We must cultivate the farm," he said.

Kandude went to the farm extension service and the Farmers Exchange and learned to farm the land. Cardoshia, an excellent tennis player but never before one for physical labor, nonetheless planted a beautiful vegetable garden, and became a gardening influencer on Instagram. The Old Woman took command of the kitchen and

started a B&B. Professor B instituted a summer lecture series, which evolved into a bit of a Chautauqua within the county and then beyond. Morton, though steadfast in his dim view of mankind, complemented the lecture series, helped Kandude with the farm, and developed quite an expertise in antique mechanics. Hopkins announced visitors and provided canine companionship to one and all.

Professor B sometimes said to Kandude: “There is a concatenation of events in this best of all possible capitalistic worlds. If you hadn’t been booted out of Cha-Ching Manor, brutalized by the Boyzenberries, arrested by Sheriff Emeritus JoBob Crappaggio, chased out of Freeman’s Ranch, shipwrecked in the Straits of Juan de Fuca, harassed in the Holy Land while searching for your beloved Cardoshia, and been blacklisted by the most brilliant and infallible man in the universe, you would not be here now plowing dirt and eating fresh vegetables from Cardoshia’s lovely garden.”

“All that is very well,” answered Kandude. “But let us cultivate the farm.”



THE END