

Introduction

Four old codgers are sick and tired of the abuse and neglect which occur daily in their old-folks-home. One has a broken leg for getting involved as he tried to help another with his bed pan. Eventually, the shit hits the fan in protest and arrest. The press is having a field day, the old folks are demonstrating and the 'Four Amigos' are playing cards, getting ready to take matters into their own hands as they vow to conquer 'Hell'--- 'Prudent-Paradise'.

They actually hire a lawyer, Chi, Clarence's grandson whom sues the State as well as the owners of 'Hell'. The residents go wild with the idea and unite as they pool their resources and purchase Prudent Paradise in the Name of Love.

They change its name to 'Social Security' and become One Big Family, with a bar, pool, hot tubs, pets, the 'O-zone', and a 'Laugh Room'. They learn to Live and Enjoy Life again as sex is on their minds.

Clarence and his Amigo's have their hands full. Sometimes he wonders if he bit off more than he can chew. He falls in Love which seems to be contagious. Unfortunately, Life is dangerous. Together, they confront destiny in spite of its ups and downs.

Eventually, they challenge greed, corruption and poverty in the Name of Humanity via www.b4heart.com. For they realize that time is running out as they erect a 'Wall of Shame'. They only pray that they can make a Difference before it is too late. Their goal is to B4HEART!

This Novel is a little obscene and a bit violent but then again, 'That's Life'. For as Mark Twain; proclaimed: 'Man is the only animal that blushes, the only one that needs to.' Alas, you will laugh and you will cry but, my aim is to make you think. Cause God help us if we laugh now and cry later. For Life is a matter of Good verses evil! Unfortunately, 'Truth' is akin to 'Cool', as both are repulsive to the 'Un'.

Sincerely,

Robert James Karpie

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Chapter One --- HELL

“We have rights! “ “We have rights! “ “We have rights! “
“No more abuse! “ “No more abuse!”

“Close that darn window, I can’t concentrate on the cards!” Sighed Henry, as a nurse granted his prerogative.

“Damn it guys, I worked all my life, over fifty-some years, half a century and for what? I certainly did not intend to be a victim of society, a by-product of neglect and broken promises. We’re Fucken Inmates? We’re prisoners of the system. Clarence complained lividly. Sign here; sign there, rules, rules, and more rules. Keep your mouth shut and do as you are told. It’s a fucking outrage, a travesty! “

“I signed all of my money over to my kids, house and all?
“ Declared; Max.

“Yah, so did I, Henry interjected. Sometimes I think that they can’t wait to collect my life insurance.”

“I haven’t any family. “ Serge confessed. “I chose to live here but, I must admit, I had more freedom in the ‘Crotch’.”

“And what thanks do we get? “ Clarence asked sarcastically.
“Welcome to Hell! “

Ironically, they all started to laugh as Hell was the nickname of their retirement home --- ‘Prudent-Paradise’. Unfortunately, there wasn’t anything prudent about it and the only pleasure was the thought of the alternative as the truth would set them free --- Destination Death.

“I want my money back! “ Max shouted.

“I want a shot and beer! “ Serge reminisced.

“I want out of here! “ Henry admitted.

“Lets do it “, exclaimed Clarence.

“Do what? “ Echoed; the other three.

“Go for the Gusto, the whole Enchilada“. Clarence replied.

“Tomorrow morning, I’m going to get my money back! I intend to enjoy my twilight years! “

“Then what are you going to do? Asked; Henry reluctantly. Are you going to get drunk, buy some Viagra, hire a hooker and rent a hotel? “

They all laughed simultaneously together. All but Clarence who; was oh so serious.

“Ha, Ha, Ha, Clarence mumbled. But I’m serious, I have a need; we all have needs, desires, and I’m going to fulfill them. Who will support us if we don’t support ourselves? There is strength in numbers. We must take matters into our own hands and ---- Create ----Our own Safety, Our own Destiny.”

“United we stand! “ Yelled; Serge. “But, what the heck are you talking about? “

“Our very own private, retirement / nursing, commune!” Clarence shouted.

The nurse started laughing ignorantly as Clarence continued. “Including bar, in-ground pools, hot tubs, coed-rooms and whatever we decide on. After all, we are adults. Why should we forfeit our rights, our hard earned money as we suffer in disgrace and misery while our colleagues are beat, raped and neglected at random on any given chance --- behind closed doors?”

“It’s so hush, hush as image is lucrative and silence ensures secrecy. I don’t know about you guys but I have had enough! God helps those that help themselves. We’re not invalids.”

“Amen!” Max shared his sentiments exactly. “I need some free love every now and again ---- ASAP. “

“God bless the 60’s! “ Henry declared. "Free- Love, Peace, Rock-n-Roll. Those were the days my Amigos’. Those Hippie-chicks would go all night and day. They always put out. It was Pure Heaven as they worshiped the Cool, older, mature and distinguished men. In fact, I married one. “

“Cool? “ Serge asked dumbfounded.

“Yah Man; Henry professed proudly! I had a ponytail, stash and pierced ear. Back then, I was ‘With It’, so to speak --- Hip. I wooed the chicks with shyness as it was my style. My wife was eight years younger than me. God Bless her Soul. As a matter of fact, I’ve been called ‘Sensitive.’ “

“Don’t tell me that you were protesting while I was fighting the VC’s in Viet Nam“. Serge; fumed aghast.

“You’re damn right! I was against that outrageous farce. The defense contractors made billions upon billions of dollars at the expense of young and old --- innocent lives on both sides? Johnson prolonged the war as he never intended to win.”

“When it comes to war, I’m skeptical. Especially since there is a very fine line between ‘ National Security’ and ‘ Corporate Security ‘ as the bottom line is money. Man is such a greedy animal whom is obsessed with power and control of others? “

“Relax! Max interjected. You’re absolutely right but, let’s deal with Clarence’s ideal for now. I’m feed up with deprivation, uncertainty and peril. “

“Let’s pool our money. “ Clarence interrupted. “Lets form a non-profit organization, doctors, nurses, staff, and the whole works. An Elite- ‘Social-Security’, run by a Board of Directors. “

“You can be our spoke person! “ Serge laughed skeptically. “All you have to do is speak slow and softly and carry a big bottle of Jack! “

“Let him continue! “ Max demanded. “It sounds interesting. ‘Hell’, is so dysfunctional? “

“I bet that there are some Philanthropists out there whom would help. “ Clarence argued his case convincingly. “After all, it is a Humane-issue. Treat us, we, the Elderly with Dignity and Respect; not as inmates. Prohibition is dead. We have Rights! No is our Option, our Choice. “

“Do you think that this State investigation will shut Hell down? “ Asked; Henry.

“No way; replied Max; Payola, Payola, Payola! They’ll do Jack Shit! “

“They’ll make some changes --- new staff and lookout for us for awhile until the media and the people forget about it; forget about us. “ Clarence answered. “But what does anybody really expect whole heartedly when the help is entrusted with our safety for meager wages. They can probably make more money walking dogs. Poor Marge hasn’t spoken a word since she was raped and Thomas is still in intensive care, because he shit his bed. Max, you’re lucky that he only broke your leg. “

"You are absolutely right. Max.; vented. But back in the day, I would have Kick his ass and he'd be lucky if he only landed in the hospital. Such is Life as it Sucks Being Old. I'm sick and tired of being a victim; violated and presented with danger, with indecency. Why, we literally live in fear. Its time we stand up for ourselves."

"One for all and all for one!" Henry shouted as the nurse shook her head in disbelief. "We must vow to stick together -- dependability. Your idea sounds Promising. He continued; we have to stop these Creeps from doing Creepy Things!"

"It's ridiculous!" Said; Serge apprehensively. "Your families will surely commit you guys to a mental hospital. Didn't you see 'Coo-Coos' Nest"? Nobody is going to give me shock therapy. It's sad enough that they try to give us saltpeter. I'll roll with the punches. Thank you, but No, No, No Thanks!"

"I thought you had balls Serge?" Queried; Henry. "What'd you do lose them in Nam? Where are you courage, your sense of pride? I'm with Clarence!"

"Me too, exclaimed; Max! The kids can fend for themselves. It's a matter of Principle, Justice for the Geriatrics. My heart bleeds for the cause for concern for we the forgotten has-beens."

"Don't get me wrong, I don't wanna be young again, but I wanna be --- Free to fuck-off if I wish. Go to bed when I want, eat when I want. Drink in moderation or get drunk if I chose to. Hell, I want some young nurse with big tits to give me a sponge-bath. Not some fat old slob, young punk or perverted fag. I'm gonna get my money too!"

"We can pull it off Serge." Said; Clarence.

"Don't jump to any conclusions. 'Coo-Coos' Nest 'dealt with a bunch of nuts. Why we aren't even senile yet. Besides, who is going to commit you? We can hire a mouth-piece to deal with our families and all the legal work. Chi will surely help us."

“Shit, we’ll even go public if we have to. After all, people Love Causes. Many will be begging to enlist and jump on the band-wagon. Just listen to that entire ruckus out there. It reminds me of the 60’s --- TV cameras, protesters demonstrating with signs. Its riot-like, half of them will invest with us. And I’ll even surf the net at the library for support.”

“OK, OK, I’m in!” “Serge reconsidered. “But I’m in charge of the bar. “

“So be it”! They all agreed as Max took out a flask of Jack Denials and the ‘Four Amigos’ toasted their spiked-lemon-aid to ‘Social Security’; the opportunity to decide for themselves.

Suddenly, Max started laughing?

"What's so funny?" Henry asked.

"You should have saved that old ponytail!" Max teased.

"You could have had it made into a rug and pasted on your bald head."

"Ha, ha, ha", Henry whimpered as the other three Amigos roared.

Needless to say, they all woke up early the next morning. In fact, none of them actually slept as each was too excited and all refused to take a sleeping pill. At breakfast, in the mess hall, they decided to get a cab and go see Chi; Clarence's grandson whom was a civil-rights lawyer. Clarence was God in Chi's eyes. Shit, he wanted Clarence to live with him but Clarence didn't want to be a burden. Perhaps deep down, Clarence knew that he had to fulfill his Destiny, it was his Duty to Make --- Change.

"What's up Guys?" Chi asked as the four frustrated reformers marched into his office unannounced. It was no surprise that Chi didn't care about the interruption. For time with family and friends was more precious than money to him. Ironically, he didn't charge half of his clients and yet, his practice was booming --- lawsuits galore as everybody was being sued. Nobody messed with Chi Charisma. The Four Amigos' came to the right place for consultation and they knew it.

"Serge wants to be in charge of the bar!" Clarence said nonchalantly.

"And we want our money back!" Max added.

"And we all want out of that 'Hell-hole'!" Shouted; Henry.

"We have rights!" Serge interrupted.

"Wow, slow down men, you'll get your blood pressure sky-high." Warned; Chi.

"One at a time, what's this all about? What bar? What money? What hellhole? And, what Rights?" Chi just couldn't help but sense how frantic and desperate the Amigos' were.

"We want to Love Life again, Live Life and have Fun before we die. But we got troubles?" Clarence clarified. We're sick and tired of being sick and tired. We want to take charge of our destiny, invest in our safety, our future. We long for Peace and comfort but unfortunately, we live in fear, antitrust and disgust? It's insulting! Our fate is in the hands of unconscionable bastards? Gandhi said 'you should judge a civilization by the way they treat their animals'. How, would he classify our society for the way it treats its senior citizens? Ironically, he continued; 'Truth' is, but akin to 'Cool', as both are Repulsive to the 'Un'.

“Some of us”, Serge interjected; “are even praying --- Hail Mary full of grace, get me out of this crazy place!”

Chi just laughed. But, the Amigos’ were serious, as they were hot under the collar.

“We’ve Seen the Light so to Speak,” added Henry, “a Reality Check. We are neglected, over medicated, physically violated, mentally anguished and some are sexually abused. It’s a Fucken Nightmare. We fear for our lives. It’s time to fight back, take responsibility for their actions. We intend to file a class action lawsuit on behalf of all the residents of ‘Prudent-Paradise’.”

“I just flew in from DC an hour ago.” Replied; Chi. “We were there for a week, the whole family. But I did hear something on the radio in the car on the way here from the airport; about protesters demonstrating? I had no idea it was of this magnitude. I was going to stop over this afternoon to investigate. Why didn’t you guys consult with me sooner? What happened to your leg Max?”

“He got Involved!” Henry shouted. “Now we all want to Get Involved! We had it! ‘Oldage’, according to Cicero: ‘is the crown of life, our play’s last act’, and we plan on going out swinging if necessary but, hopefully --- Partying.”

“We intend to control our own destiny, make a difference between Peace and Misery. For you can’t negotiate with evil, it thrives on negotiation. Will you please help us set the record straight as ominous expectations are terrifying?”

“I’m in your corner!” Chi assured. “Now what’s this about rape and physical abuse? ‘Prudent-Paradise’, has the best reputation on the East Coast. It’s state of the art, paramount to being a class-act.”

“It’s a Fucken Prison with hush, hush bull-shit. Max interrupted. Most of the residents are so doped up that they don’t even get out of bed. Those of us that do, mind our own business. Especially in the last six months, since the staff cuts and changes. I don’t know where they hired the new help from? They are so impatient, so cruel and lack experience.”

Chi shook his head in total disgust as Max continued. "Shit, I don't think that half of them can read let alone give needles or take blood pressure accurately. They spend most of their time bitching and complaining about the job and how they deserve a raise."

"They relish in bad-attitudes. They're selfish, inconsiderate, rude and nasty-mean; void of values, without soul. I don't know weather the State or Feds cut back or what but something is wrong? Malfunctions? We are in deep shit literally as our lives are in the hands of a bunch of mishaps."

"Three days ago, Serge added; Thomas Manheart got beaten to a pulp because he shit his bed. He's in a coma now as we speak. Two days before that, the same demented attendant pushed Max over a bunch of tables for helping Thomas with his bed pan."

"That's when I broke my leg. " Max cried. "The bastard is in jail now and come find out, he had been raping Marge Simmons for three or four months. "

"She is so scared," Clarence informed; "that it's no wonder why she hasn't spoken a word since it started. The bastard was caught raping her right after he beat Thomas. Rumor has it that he was on some shit called ---crack?"

"The shit is hitting the fan. Everybody is anticipating more scandal. We are suspicious and skeptical of the whole staff? Paranoia is prevalent. Chaos is pending. And we want out."

"Rest assured; your wish is my command. " Chi promised as he sympathized with their plight. "Lawsuits, new staff, state and Fed investigations, etc., etc. Now let's go have a talk with the administration and put the Fear of God into them and Guarantee your Safety. "

The Four Amigos' felt relieved. They were all glad that they told it like it is and, got it off their chest. They summed it all up --- page, chapter and verse, as they were all gung-ho. They may be old, but they were Ready, Willing and Able to Make a Difference as their Hearts were in the right place.

They wanted to clean house, disinfect the germs and; abolish hell. But, compromise and attitude adjustments were out of the question; not options, as they weren't the answers to their problem.

“Not so fast, Clarence insisted; there is more, much more to deal with. “

“OK, Something about money and a bar? Chi didn’t forget. However, I haven’t a clue what you are referring to, he continued. But, I do sense the anxiousness; the extreme urgency in the matter? Enlighten me. “

“Well, Clarence replied; we want all of our money back, which we signed over to our families. We don’t care about tax laws, inheritance penalties, medical costs, etc. etc. It’s our money, we earned it and we deserve to spend it by choice ---- freely.”

“Actually, Henry elaborated. We wish to invest it.”

“We wish to incorporate our own safety! “ Serge exclaimed. “In foreign countries the old are reverend in high esteem, worshipped for their wisdom with honor and respect. Unfortunately, here in the US, we are treated like burdens --- senile old fools? A fart gets more respect. “

“We are determined to exercise our duty and help each other! “ Max vowed. “It’s time for a change. The ‘System;’ Sucks. Together, we shall establish our own privately owned retirement / nursing commune --- with doctors and nurses on staff, along with a bar, hot-tubs, pool, coed rooms and whatever we agree upon.”

“We are willing to go public, but we prefer to be a nonprofit organization. “ Clarence insisted. “We’ll solicit Philanthropists, barter, beg, borrow, steal or do whatever we have to do to succeed. “

Chi scratched his head and then, he started to laugh. He laughed so hard that it was contagious as everybody joined in. The commotion was so loud that it caught his secretary’s curiosity as she came a snooping into the room.

“Hold all of my calls Jamie. “ Chi commanded. “I’m in the fight of my life. These guys are on a mission. ‘May the Force be with us’”.

“Amen! “ Yelled; Henry.

“This calls for a toast! “ Serge suggested.

“But of course”; Chi agreed as he pulled out a bottle of Jack.

Jamie got six glasses and they all toasted to Dedication in the name of ‘Social Security’, a little Peace on Earth --- a Last Hurrah.

After the short celebration, Chi drove his four Amigos' back to Hell and literally put the fear of God into the administration; which guaranteed their safety. He promised to talk to all their families regarding their prior money, since he handled all the legal matters in the first place. He didn't anticipate any problems, in getting the money back as he knew all parties involved.

After all, right is right. But, he assured them that he'd use his reputation to put the screws to any resister --- if necessary. He also vowed to represent all that needed help to get this project realized. After all, he loved his Pa-Pa as well as the other Amigos'.

It was pandemonium at suppertime in the mess hall when the word got out --- an elated uproar. The excitement was cause for disorder. The seniors acted like a pack of teens?

"No more victims of circumstances!" Someone yelled.
"Victory shall be ours!" Added; another.

It could have gotten chaotic if Clarence didn't calm them down. Finally, an Aura of Peace prevailed. Every coherent resident wanted in. United they all vowed to stand. They even agreed to take care of the incoherent. Chi had his work cut out for him. But in the name of Love and Justice, failure wasn't an option

Chapter Two ---- Genesis

They say patience is a virtue but the natives were restless. Fortunately, Hope kept their Dream alive and Faith in God, self, Chi and each other made it a reality. It was Serge who came up with their motto. Being a former Marine, a Retired Lifer, it was only natural to adopt 'Semper Fi', (Semper Fidelis); ' Always Faithful for 'Social Security' --- their new retirement-commune / nursing home. Active participation was the key. Pets were welcome. A garden was mandatory, as homegrown veggies are the healthiest.

“All for one and one for all”! Clarence yelled as he christened the newly renovated building, which was sold to its former inmates.

“Amen, “someone; hollered.

“It’s ours, it’s ours! “ Echoed; throughout the crowd as they all rejoiced.

“Congratulations Pa! “ Chi said as he shook Clarence’s hand. “Good Luck. “

“Thanks, Clarence replied; we’re going to need it.”

Cameras were all over the place, everywhere --- media galore as the elders had had enough and took matters --- destiny into their own hands. Creativity was their savior as they bonded in Togetherness.

“Speech, speech!” The crowd chanted as Clarence neared the podium with Chi and the mayor of the city --- Olga Om’Heart.

“Congratulations fellow citizens for your efforts and your achievement. On behalf of the rest of the city of Inspirationville, we are proud of each and every one of you inspired reformers for living up to our great city’s name. We wish you the very best of luck and I am honored to present your commune with these two hand carved, golden engraved plaques to hang; one over your door and the other over your fireplace“

“The first plaque is adopted from ‘Peace Pilgrim’, as her philosophy is the sacred way of peace -----

‘Overcome evil with Good,
Falsehood with Truth;
And hatred; with Love’”.

The crowd went berserk. “Peace! Peace! Peace at Last!” They; all chanted as Olga continued; “the second plaque simply reads --- Social Security

Our Home Sweet Home!

May God Bless and Protect Each and Every One of You! “

Again, the crowd went crazy. “Peace! Peace! Peace at Last! “They; Shouted. Clarence stepped up to the podium, waved his hands to get their attention but they only got louder.

”My dear, dear friends, he interrupted; I understand that we are about to receive a little cash donation. Actually, he continued, two big donations. May I present Eon Adams from IARP, and Quincy Jones from Humane International? “

The crowd cheered as the two men came up to the podium. Mr. Adams spoke first. His presentation was short and sweet. “It is an honor to be here. On behalf of the International Association of Retired People, I am pleased to present your commune with this Million-Dollar check. “

“Thank You! Thank You! Thank You! “The crowd cheered.

Next, Mr. Jones gave an identical speech and on behalf of Humane International presented Clarence with another Million-Dollar check. This time though, Clarence gave the Thank You.

“United we stand! “ Clarence shouted

“United we stand“, the crowd roars back.

“Blessed is he,” Clarence continues; “whom is dedicated to our ‘Legacy of Love’; a Willing Effort, a Will to Share.”

Clarence knew how to work the crowd but he had no intentions of exploiting his captive audience. His motives were purely spiritual ---- in the Name of Humanity.

“Dedication, Dedication, Dedication”, the crowd promised.

"As you all know; we wouldn't be here today if it weren't for my grandson Malachite Charisma better known as Chi".

"Chi, Chi, Chi!" The crowd chanted as Chi approached the microphone and addressed his clients.

"I am proud to represent 'Social-Security'! Your 'Constitution of Love'; is simple and as Sacred as any constitution anywhere. It puts all the others to shame. Courtesy, Commitment and Communication are edifying. Your Pledge to Honor, Serve and Protect Each Other is Precious. Betrayal is evil. Evil is ugly. Live up to your Promise to Stand up to evil. You have a Right to 'Bare Arms'. You have a Right to 'Pets' as well as a 'Bar', 'Sunken-Hot-Tubs', 'Coed-Rooms,' and --- 'No Curfew'. "

"Freedom, Freedom, Freedom"; the crowd; cheered!

"Hell is history! Chi continued. But its evil was no mystery. For as Mark Twain warned: 'Loyalty to petrified opinion never broke a chain or freed a human soul.'"

"Your silence only fanned the flames of its dirty secrets. Your Silence became Consent! Don't you ever forget it. For evil must be Confronted --- Always. Accountability! Accountability! Accountability, in spite of Plausible Deniability! Undivided pretension is evil."

"When 'shit happens', you must deal with it. When 'Grace Happens', you best enjoy it. Savor your Blessings!"

"Beware of the power of suggestion. Consent is precious. Don't get conned. Choice is yours --- 'To Do or, Not To Do'"

"Responsibility, Responsibility, Responsibility. And, remember that the Secular Powers that Be --- Fear the Power of a Crowd, the Power of the People; the Power of Conscientious Objection. "

"United, you succeeded. You took charge of your Destiny as you Invested in Your Future, Your Safety. You realized that Co-Dependency is Sacred and Dependability is Divine as Care, Concern and Compassion ensures Relationship, Relationship, and Relationship."

“Never underestimate the Power of Love! Embrace each other --- Always! Love is the Key! Love heightens awareness and enhances the quality of interactions. Chivalry is a code of courage, a charismatic vow --- to defend the weak and challenge the strong. Charisma is a ‘Gift of Grace’.”

“In closing, I leave you with a Thought to Ponder: Does Respect; have to be Earned? Or, is Respect a mutual given --- until it is forfeited? Thank you and God Bless Your Peaceful Co-Existence! “

The crowd cheered and applauded until Clarence stepped up and yelled.

“Who’s hungry? Dinner is being served as you listen. I spied Mayor Om’Heart sneaking over there. Look, there she is stuffing her face. Go and get it but save some for the press and I”.

The first day was hectic to say the least. It started out in chaos as family members were bringing --- Pets for their Loved-Ones. Serge slipped in a puddle of piss. The noise was unbelievable, fighting was inevitable --- amongst the creatures and the commune itself was divided in bickering concerns as war broke out.

Clarence had to call a special meeting to address the issues, certain particulars. Compromise was necessary; it wasn't easy but rules were agreed upon and established. Responsibility was mandated as boundaries were set. The pet problem was dealt with swiftly and satisfactory --- proper edicts.

Unfortunately, that was just the beginning as Max put a CD in of --- 'Lets Get Drunk and Screw ' and, four men and three women got drunk --- shit-faced. Three of them puked all over the place. Two of the women got in a catfight over one of the guys. Serge pulled what little hair he had had left out of his head. He barred all seven of them.

Bar rules had to be established. No more free booze, deterrents were necessary. No more alcohol allowed in the sunken bar at the pool. Somebody got tipsy and fell into the water. The lifeguard saved her.

Sex was going on in half of the rooms. Two of the condom dispensers jammed but at least they were practicing safe sex. One resident gave Viagra to anybody and everybody who wanted it. One of the male experimenters got so excited that he literally had a heart attack. Thank God, he didn't die.

Sex had to be subjected to protocol, as precautions were necessary. The majority had spoken as you needed a special ID pass and permission from your doctor to participate in the 'O-Zone', a 1960's type of Free-Love-room --- including incense, candles, hanging-beads, strobe-lights, VCRs, couches, vibrating chairs, heart-shaped-Jacuzzis', etc.

Unfortunately, you can't please all the people all the time as freedom entails responsibility. But, at least most of the commune --- felt alive again. And all; savored the atmosphere of Safety, Comfort and Love --- Quality Time.

All in all, believe it or not; other than a few plugged toilets and an asthma attack, no other major incidents occurred that first week. Perhaps the excitement wore off or perhaps they could behave like adults after all? But, maybe one party a week was all that they could handle. Time would tell, as the staff didn't know what to expect.

At times, they got a good laugh but other times startled them as the elders exploited curiosity and went with the flow. Their adopted thesis was choice of desire --- 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do'. It was a menagerie of 'Monkey see, Monkey do'! How long would it last; Peer-Pressure?

Clarence was having a bad day. In fact, it was a rough week. He thought to himself. What did I get myself into? I haven't had time to take a decent shit. "That's it, he mumbled; its time to slow down; as he pondered Oliver Wendell Holmes: 'What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.'"

Things will work out in due time, he assured himself. Faith is the Key! Bold Belief! Fear and doubt are Divine No-No's. And, then he remembered and prayed the 'Serenity Prayer'.

'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference'.

He was sincere as he vowed ---- "I'll do my best but I'm letting go and letting God. The ball is in His hands now. So be it."

Suddenly, Clarence spotted the Grand Piano just sitting there in the huge living room. It was anonymously donated six weeks ago. It's been collecting dust, fifteen feet from the stone fireplace--- unnoticed, untouched --- pure neglect?

Shame on us, he surmised; but to his surprise, it was in perfect tune. After all, he should know since he pounded the Ivory before he could talk.

Without hesitation, he played the first solo that he learned --- 'Chop-Sticks'. He got so involved that it was if he were back in time practicing it over and over and over again and again until he realized he had had a huge audience. He stopped and they applauded.

Surprisingly, a strange voice said, "please; continue. Do you know anything else?"

Clarence was dumbstruck; he was bitten by the 'Luv-Bug'.

"It, it, it's been a long time. " He stuttered.

"Mind if I join you? " She asked seductively.

"No, no, not at all, "Clarence admitted shyly as he moved over.

She slid next to him and they played 'Double Chop-Sticks'; as her smell of perfume drove him wild.

"What's your name? " Clarence asked curiously.

"Peg; "she replied.

"Oh yah, "he remembered.

"You're here for the position of Director of Nursing Staff. Your resume is quite impressive, your credentials --- outstanding. The board approved and the State did an extensive background check and, you already seem to fit in here. Just look at them smiling faces. You're hired, if you wish! "

"I think I'm going to like it here; "she replied.

"Yes, I wish. "

"Your wish is my command; "Clarence granted.

"Thank you; "Peg responded.

"Your presence is most welcomed. " He assured.

"Lucy, my secretary will show you to your office. Shall we go find her? "

"Why certainly. " Peg agreed.

As the duet rose, so did their audience as they got a standing-ovation.

"Encore! Encore! "They shouted.

"Later; "Clarence promised!

"We all have work, to do. Now go tend to your duties. "

"Slave driver; slave driver!" Yelled Chi whom caught their performance; unbeknownst to them.

"PaPaPa", little Jim-Jim, the apple of Chi and Clarence's eye came running and jumped into Clarence's arms.

"Can I do dat?" He pointed excitedly.

"No, not now Jimmy "; shouted his mother ---- Brandie; Chi's wife!

“Leave him alone“, ordered Clarence! Of coarse you can play with the piano.”

“Come here Jim-Jim, yelled Lucy. You can teach me how to tickle the Ivory. “

“Oh no Lucy; Clarence clarified! You have to get Peg situated --- show her the ropes. Jimmy can learn Pa-Pa. “

“Slave driver; Slave driver; “Lucy verified!

“Sorry Tyrant, “Chi interjected.

“But we --- you and I have business to attend to. They made an offer but I think we can get more. Besides, Jimmy and Brandie are going to the zoo.”

“So are you and I”! Clarence insisted.

“We can talk there with the animals as witnesses. I might need some extra special advice, some divine inspiration as we frolic freely. “Everybody just laughed as they went about their business.

In the SUV, on the ride to the zoo; Clarence was at Peace. What a difference a couple of hours can make, he thought. At 9 AM, I was overwhelmed, felt so burned-out. But now --- 11 AM, as he looked at the clock on the radio; I feel so wonderful. Thank you Jesus!

Jim-Jim broke the silence of the quiet travel.

“Can I tell Pa-Pa the secret? “

“What secret? “ Asked; Clarence curiously.

“Go right ahead. “Brandie insisted.

“Mommy gonna have a baby! “

“Oh, my, my, congratulations to --- each and every one of you.“ Exclaimed; Pa.

“When is the Blessed Event? “

“There is plenty of time. “ Chi assured.

“But, there is another surprise. Enlighten him Brand.”

“Well, I’ve been soliciting donations for the commune for the last six months now without any luck until today. Nelson Brinkworth from Jersey, the rich and famous Philanthropists; just wrote a check for \$ 10 million! “

Astonished in disbelief, Clarence was flabbergasted with elation. “Oh my, my; he shouted! Thank you Brandie! Thank you Nelson! Thank you Jesus! “

“Amen! Interrupted Chi. God works in mysterious ways, as patience is a virtue, persistence divine. The insurance offer is tempting Pa, but I think that we should refuse it --- as patience, in spite of its rather exceptional generosity. “

“You have the final say. However, this \$10 million donation will more than cover all the upgrades as well as the new equipment. Social-Security is solvent. Besides, the state suit is still pending. We can afford to wait. It would be stupid to jump on the first proposal, as stupidity is an unforgivable sin. “

“You’re the expert, “Clarence replied.

“Our welfare is in your hands. We trust your proficient judgment, second to none --- Un-equivallently. “

“Thanks Pa, Chi answered modestly yet proud that the commune cherished his evaluations. I shall decline the offer and see them in court if need be. The jury will act as our power of persuasion. They’ll surely re-negotiate, as they can’t afford negative publicity, since they still own another dozen facilities.”

”I’ll drag this through the media upon media --- multi-media-galore; until they beg --- settle, settle, please. They can’t deny the facts, the ugly truth. They are liable. ‘Hell’; was evil as the wrap-sheet speaks for itself.”

“How are Marge and Thomas doing? “ Asked; Brandie sympathetically.

“Marge sulks in silence, she still hasn’t spoken a single word and Thomas is out of limbo as he is no longer a vegetable but, he is paralyzed from the waist down.“ Clarence cried.

“That bastard should be castrated! “ Chi declared with a voice of anger.

“He hasn’t any conscience in any size, shape or form. His willful disregard for others is diabolically evil. What he did is unforgivable. Compensation is not closure, but it’s a start.”

“Marge’s, Thomas’ and Max’s lawsuits are all separate issues. Each of them will go in front of a jury. Negligence, neglect and abuse are serious charges.”

“Ggarrrfs, ggarrrfs, giraffes, giraffes, “Jimmy pointed as he tripped on his tongue.

”That’s right Jim-Jim. “ Verified; Pa-Pa.

“Do you want to feed them? “

“Can I? Can I? “He cried.
 “But of course. “Assured; Pa.

While Jimmy was feeding the giraffes, Clarence smiled to himself. The apple-of-his-eye had a twinkle in his eye. He recognized that look, that innocence --- Blissful Ignorance. After all, he raised his Family and he was there as Chi grew up. It was as if he were going back in time. Memories, Sweet Memories!

Clarence shared his Wisdom with Chi and Brandie as he explained that: “when you look into the eyes of a child, you see Pure-Passion; a Lust for Life, Hope, Trust and Curiosity. A child, he continued; is the Essence of Beauty, an Entrusted Miracle --- Longing for Love. Inadvertently, they know that they must adapt but, they also learn that Death is ordained.”

“Enjoy him, he advised, because he’ll grow fast. And watch over him as there is plenty of evil in this world that is watching and waiting, anticipating if and when to lure upon, abuse, corrupt and manipulate him. There is nothing worst than burying your child. Encourage his Dreams and Learn from his Innocence. Set an Example and Teach Him the Value of Love! Never give up on Him. If he gives up on himself, give him a swift kick in the ass and then Hug and Kiss him.”

Brandie had tears in her eyes as she listened to Pa’s concerning discourse and patted her pregnant stomach. She knew that Clarence lost a teen-aged son --- William. Chi put his arm around his emotional wife as Pa helped Jim feed the giraffes and continued his rational.

“Unfortunately though, “he exclaimed.
 “Society infringes upon their Innocence, their Dreams --- just as it does to its seniors? Is it not a vicious circle? Oddly enough, so many old revert back to being a child as subconsciously, we long for the safety and comfort of Mother’s womb. As a matter of fact, some even curl-up into the fetal position --- Longing for Love. May God bless them all, Both the Young and Old. “

Suddenly, Clarence picked Jim-Jim up. Cradling him in his arms, he added; “We are all Mysterious Miracles of God. Someday, mankind will learn the difference between Curiosity and Compassion! “

Chi and Brandie are touched by Pa's sincerity. They hug and kiss and Chi jokes: "Brandie sleeps in a curled-up-fetal-position."

"Ha, ha", they all laugh as she smacked him on his chest.

Speaking of miracles, Jim-Jim got the biggest kick out of the two baby giraffes, as he was tickled-pink.

"Can I ride them PaPa? Can I, can I, Please?"

"Sorry, "Brandie spoils his plan.

"You can't ride giraffes. They're not like horses."

"Yes you can!" Insisted little Jimmy.

"Can not."

"Can too! I rode one on the Merry-go-round."

Brandie, Chi and Clarence just busted out laughing.

"From the mouths of Babes, "Pa warned

"Beware as Innocence can be Embarrassing. The Truth will set you --- Fleeing in a Hurry!"

"We already experienced a few episodes --- when we wanted to crawl under a rock." Chi admitted.

"Like Father, like Son "Brandie teased.

"Like Grandfather, like Grandson." Chi shifted the blame.

"Its hereditary, DNA doesn't lie; it's in the genes." Pa confessed officially.

"I'm hungry." Jimmy growled.

"Me too", Pa agreed!

"What do you guys want?" Brandie asked.

"Cotton-candy and a snow-cone," Jim-Jim demanded!

"How about a hot-dog and fries first?" Dad suggested.

"Then you can have anything your little heart desires."

"Really," he asked?

"Really," Chi promised!

After they finished lunch, Jimmy decided that he wanted a huge stuffed-animal --- 'Gorgeous Gorilla'. Pa granted his wish and Jim-Jim wanted to go home and play with it.

"So much for the Zoo." Mom said without any doubt.

"We can come back --- Tomorrow!" Replied; the Apple- of-Their-Eye.

"I guess obnoxious and initiative run in the family too. Pa surmised. Sometimes Parents have to respect the Wishes of their Children."

"Ironically, he warned, The Bible commands --- to Honor your Mother and Father. But, did they Honestly Earn your Respect? Are they Truly Worthy of Your Honor? Perhaps Pity? "

"Shouldn't we Honor our Children! Will we earn their Respect? Will they Pity us? Isn't every child a Precious interactive part of the Circle-of-Life as we En-Trust them with our Future? Unfortunately, pay-back can be hell. So behold as an Understanding Heart is a Cause for Concern."

Both Chi and Brandie nodded as if to heed Clarence's advice as he continued.

"Beware of the terrible-tuos' and threes' as they require Love and Patience. And, beware of the terrible-teens' as they require more Love and Patience. For Love is the Stellar Force of Nature. Love should be held in the highest Reverence --- Awe, Affection and Veneration as Love Ensures the Beauty of Life."

"Never; he continued! Never break a young and innocent Spirit with conformity as his Passion shall become --- dull routine. But, encourage that same young and innocent Spirit with Love and Understanding and, his Passion will exceed --- our Wildest Dreams.

Brandie and Chi both promised to do their best as Pa let them in on his little secret. "I believe in reincarnation and I also believe that we all choose our own Parents before birth as part of a Spiritual Goal."

While Pa-Pa was giving his little Sermon, Jim-Jim fell fast asleep, cuddling his 'Gorgeous Gorilla'. Clarence was extremely Proud of his Pro-Creation's. He closed his eyes too and contemplated on his experiences here on Mama Earth, a little Soul-Searching.

He had witnessed his share of Life and Death. The Joy, the Pain of Daily Existence. Grief, sorrow and acceptance; as well as struggle, rejection and deprivation? It was still hard to comprehend; perhaps even harder to swallow. But he came to realize that Life is a matter of Truth or Consequences. 'To do', or 'not to do'? Reason, Free-Will and Conscientious Objection! He valued his Intuition! He recognized the significance, the importance of getting involved as each has a Duty to make a Difference, to Risk his Life if necessary in the name of Truth, Justice and the Humane-Way.

Why is man so mystique, so obscure? He asked himself. Peculiarly, man is the mystery himself. We make life so complicated. Why? 'The Fall'; was no accidental coincidence --- waiting to happen. It was inevitable. For when curiosity and greed unite, it is like water and oil; which don't mix. It is a sure recipe for disaster. God, Help Us, Please. Where are we headed?

Intuitively, Clarence perceived that 'Freedom isn't Free', and 'Need knows No-Season'. Ironically, sometimes Life can be so ugly; even unbearable. But it's an awful crying shame when Humans make it uglier. Its plain evil when they don't get involved or just sit back, laugh and do nothing about it --- poverty, need, greed, corruption, neglect and abuse of power. For Life is a living hell thanks to both the sins of commission as well as the sins of omission.

Suddenly, Clarence awoke from his meditative state and shared his revelations with Chi. Chi was impressed with Pa's wisdom and shared his convictions exactly. But they had other issues to address; they didn't have time to save the world. Not now; perhaps later; perhaps when Social Security was smooth, without doubts or confusion.

"What do you think about Peg?" Chi changed the subject. Clarence beamed with embarrassment. He was anxious but downplayed his excitement as he literally forgot about her.

"Ah, she is OK." He mumbled as anticipation set in and his mind wondered. Maybe, just maybe he hoped. But shit, was she too young; he pondered with doubt. Would she reject me? She must be in her mid fifties? Damn it, I can't ask her age. That's a No-No.

Chi just laughed in silence as disappointment appeared on Clarence's face. It was obvious that he was frustrated until Brinkworth's \$ 10 million donation danced in his head. He couldn't wait to tell the others. Why, he thought to himself, why didn't I let go sooner and let God --- Always?

Peg greeted Clarence when he got dropped off --- back home at Social Security. His heart pounded like crazy and then skipped a beat or two. He felt stupid. He was clumsy, weak in the knees as he almost awkwardly tripped over his own two feet. Calm down he told himself as he headed for a Jack.

"Sound the Cause for Celebration!" He commanded with excitement. As Serge tolled the bell, he asked. "What happened to the slave driver?"

"There is a time to work and a time for play." Clarence replied. "But this isn't either. It's a time to celebrate, he shouted as the bar got filled with curiosity. We got a donation and I mean a donation -- \$ 10 million, tax free; complements of Mr. Nelson Brinkworth. It's a wonderful day."

"Thank you Jesus"; somebody yelled, as everybody was so excited!

"Drinks are on the house!" Announced Serge as Peg strolled over and congratulated Clarence. He thanked her and everybody toasted cheers to 'Social Security'; in the name of Mr. Brinkworth. And then, someone put a CD in of Louis Armstrong's famous solo --- 'What a Wonderful World'. It was unbelievable as everybody sang; everybody except Marge and some incoherent patients on the second floor.

'What a Wonderful World'

I see trees of green, red roses too
I see them bloom for me and you
And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.

I see skies of blue and clouds of white
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night

And I think to myself, what a wonderful world.

The colours of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky
 Are also on the faces of people going by
 I see friends shakin hands, sayin' "How do you do"
 They're really saying "I Love You"

I hear babies cryin', I watch them grow
 They'll learn much more than I'll ever know
 And I think to myself, what a wonderful world
 Yes, I think to myself, what a wonderful world

Oh Yeah.

When the song ended, Peg had tears in her eyes. The participation was so electrifying, poetry in motion. Clarence looked at her and she jumped in his arms and gave him a big hug-n-kiss.

"I'm sorry. " She apologized as she shocked the living shit out of him.

"I, I just couldn't help myself. I'm just so happy for all of you. You have something very extra special here. I'm proud to be aboard. "

Clarence was in Puppy-Love-shock. He was utterly speechless but decided to play a hunch, as he trusted his gut instinct --- Intuition; which never failed him.

"I need a confidant, he confided. Somebody I can trust with extra special activities. Loyalty is pertinent, even critical for the commune. Are you interested? "

She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and said. "I am but let me sleep on it first".

"OK! Clarence agreed. We'll talk tomorrow. Now then, do you want to dance? "

"I do! " She giggled like a teen with butterflies in her stomach, as Clarence was quite the charmer. They were both goo-goo-eyed, as they danced in delight until well past midnight. In fact, nobody left early as they all deserved it --- drinks, pizza, wings, subs and all.

Clarence insisted on Peg getting a ride home from the night staff driver. He told her to leave her car here and that the day driver would pick her up at 8:30 AM sharp. Then he kissed her on her forehead and said “good-nite”, as she went ga-ga into a daze.

She left with the driver as Clarence requested. She was a bit tipsy. She never drank Jack before. Asti was her preference of choice. Ironically, the bar emptied instantly as if everyone would turn into pumpkins at any minute; everybody except the Four Amigos.

“Hey Romeo; “Serge yelled over to Clarence!

“Was that private property or what? “

“I think he’s in Love “Henry interrupted.

“Did you see them dancing and gawking at each other all night as if they had nothing better to do? ”

“Bedroom-eyes but no balls! ” Max made it unanimous.

“She’s special. “ Clarence retaliated.

“She makes me feel young again. You guys are just jealous with envy. For she’s a fox! Her class shines brightly. But regardless, we need her here, its destiny. I like her a lot and I’m going to target her heart --- one day at a time. “

“You gonna roll with the punches“? Serge joked as Clarence walked over to the piano.

“I think he wants to roll her in the sack and jump her bones. “ Max assumed.

“Ah, leave him alone. Henry sympathizes with jealousy. It looks like they got something pretty special. “

“Why thank you for noticing Henry. Clarence replied. Its magical, I’m on Cloud 9, my destination is ---Love”. Clarence began to pound the Ivory and sang as they all laughed. But he had the last laugh by the time the night was through. He wrote her a Love Song and it was a Beauty.

Chapter Three --- Intrusion

Needless to say, word spread fast about the commune's \$10 million windfall. It made the front page of the local newspaper. Clarence didn't like the publicity. He was glad that he and his Amigos' were qualifying tomorrow on the range for their pistol permits. Shit by all rights, he thought to himself, there wasn't any cash here. But then, you never know what warped or immature minds think. Besides, the book-making operation was almost ready to go --- full force and, that's strictly cash. Tomorrow, he'd feel better as the Four Amigos' would be 'Comrades-in-Arms'.

The four comrades were drinking coffee in the sunroom when Peg drove up in the corporate-car. Serge whistled as she walked up the drive. She blushed --- beat-red.

"Do you know much about flowers?" Clarence asked her stupidly.

"Good-Morning to you too; " she snapped!

"I'm sorry. Clarence apologized. It's good to see you. "

She smiled and greeted the other three Amigos' whom, echoed likewise.

"I need a head gardener. " Clarence cried.

"I'll take care of it. " Peg assured. "Is there any coffee left? " She asked.

"It's on the table next to the grill." Henry enlightens.

"Will you have time to find a Gardner? " Max asked kindly.

"I'll manage. " She responded confidently.

Ironically, nobody mentioned last night. Clarence was too shy. Serge, Henry and Max --- minded their own business. And Peg was all business-like. Was she a little drunk or is she playing hard to get? Clarence wondered. That is the mystery.

"I see Social Security made the headlines "Peg commented softly.

"We don't need that kind of exposure. " Clarence insisted sincerely.

"Clarence, Lucy's voice calls on the intercom; telephone."

"Already; Clarence mumbles as he picked up the phone on the table? Yah, yah, Ok, yah, I'll be here." He barked.

"Who was it; "Serge ask?

"It's the phone company. " He replied. They want to hook up the lines; upstairs in the 'Laugh Room'; as well as in the offices on the third floor."

"I can't wait! " Henry laughs. "Hey baby, "he continues as he disguises his voice; "do you want to hear how I masturbate"?

"I most certainly do not; you, you perverted-pig. "Peg hollered as she stormed out of the room.

Henry is lividly embarrassed into shame -- literally. The other Amigos' laugh and laugh and laugh until finally, Henry joins in.

"You got some explaining to do. " Max warns. "You better pick her a bunch of flowers".

"I'll explain! " Clarence interrupted jealously. He didn't want anybody infringing or giving any presents to Peg but him as he had the HOTS for her. He didn't need any competition.

Suddenly, there was a big commotion in the garden. Too many Chiefs, and not enough Indians. Everybody was excited about planting the veggies. Everyone was a self-proclaimed expert. Pushing and shoving would of ended in actual fighting if it wasn't for Peg whom insisted that each have their own special area, and personal little gardens for whomever wished. The situation was under control by the time the Four Amigos' arrived.

Sometimes compromise works. Perhaps more often than not but, ironically though, not when Truth is at stake. Peg knew this secret. She was a natural diplomat. Only a fool negotiates with his integrity as he sacrifices his dignity. She didn't believe in bullshit and the Amigos' came to respect her for that.

"Wow! Serge whispered. She put each and every one of them in their proper place --- Peacefully. We could have used her in Nam. There is nothing-worst then dissension, as it can be disastrous. Leadership is critical. She is special indeed. Her diplomatic resolution is Precious. "

"Ironically," he laughed; humans can be as delicate as flowers. Sometimes you have to tip-toe through their egos which are so fragile. They like to be pacified. But, sometimes you must crush an ego or two or they will spread like a poisonous wild fire."

The other three agreed with his sediments but, Clarence was on Cloud 9 and Henry was trying to hide, as he was still sincerely embarrassed; agonizing in shame. Max told Clarence; “you best make your move before I play upon her sympathy for my poor old broken leg. Maybe, she’ll push me around in a wheel chair. “He joked.

“Ha, ha, Clarence laughed. But you better --- can the ‘sympathy strategy’ or else you will end up in a wheel chair.” They all laughed together as Peg asked --- “what’s so funny? Is the pervert sharing his dirty gross and offensive secrets? “

Henry just wanted to die. “It’s all a big misunderstanding! Clarence tried to assure her. Please, please let’s all go inside and we will explain the whole thing to you. “

She hesitated but followed them into the bar. Suddenly, Serge announced, “the bar is now officially open. What are your pleasures? “

Peg gave him the evil eye and insisted: “A bit early, to drink. Don’t you think? “

“I, I think I need a Jack.” Henry stutters.

“This better be good. “ Peg reminds them.

Serge set up five rock-glasses but Peg declines as he only pours four bourbons. Henry downs his like an ordinary shot and says “I’m going to have one more and then I think I’ll stay. “

“Ha, ha, ha; “Peg laughs as Serge sets him up again. Peg sits on a barstool as Clarence tries to rectify the situation. “Believe you-me, it’s not what you think. Do you remember when I told you that I could use a confidant? “

“Yah but, “she replied.

“Well, Clarence continued; that’s part of it. “

“Well then, she insisted; I want no part of it! “ Then she started to walk away again. “Wait; Wait, Please; Henry shouted. I, I’m sorry; honest. “

“Give him a chance to explain! “ Serge pleaded.

“OK. OK, she responded; but I warn you.”

“Soon you’ll be laughing with us. “ Max budded in.

“Perhaps we should all go and sit at the table. “ Clarence points.

“Well, spit it out. Peg demands. ‘ Make my day ‘; I could use a good one.”

“The commune voted, Clarence tried to clarify; and we all decided to go into business. Actually two businesses and one of them is sort of kinky. “

Peg was curious yet, confused. “You’re not pimps? Are you?” “She cried.

“Hell no; Clarence assured her! The first business is going to be run in an office on the third floor. But, we didn’t get the computers yet. Besides, we still have research to do. We need a web-site and a supplier as we plan on selling lingerie and sex-toys.”

Ironically, it was Peg’s turn to blush with crimson embarrassment as Max interrupted. “We’re going to call it Erotic Delights.”

“That’s funny?” Peg asked sadly.

“No, but the other business is. Henry interjected radiantly. It’s something, which the whole commune is looking forward to in anticipation. “

“You caught Henry practicing. “ Serge joked.

Peg was more confused than ever? “Wha, What; “She mumbled out loud?

“We are only going to operate it on Friday and Saturday nights, Henry continued; --- in a huge room on the second floor. We named it the ‘Laugh-Room ‘. “

“It’s for shits and giggles, Max grinned. Everybody wants to participate in 1-900-sex-chat.”

Peg busted out; she almost busted a gut.

“I guess Bingo is obsolete. She surmised. It, it’s Brilliant! What a form of entertainment.”

“Profitable too; “Henry beamed with relief!

“May I participate?” She begged.

“Absolutely, by all means; Serge assured! But you better not talk dirty in front of Clarence; he might explode. “

Clarence was in shock. He felt like a shrinking violet. He bit his lip with perplexity as he held his tongue. He just wanted to vanish, become invisible or at least change the subject. But, he was speechless.

Peg couldn't believe her ears as the other three were rolling on the floor --- trying to catch their breath. "What am I going to do with you guy's; she asked? Maybe I should wear earplugs? "

"You'll get used to us; Clarence insisted! We shall surely grow on you. "

"That's what I'm afraid of; she said sarcastically. Count me in --- El Confidante. "

"Bingo! " Serge yells. "Can I pour you a Jack? "

"No, no, no Jack for me, thank you; "Peg refuses.

"Party-Pooper; "Henry teases!

"I'll have an Asti, please. "

"That's my girl." Clarence says spontaneously without thinking as pure emotions escaped him from his heart. Peg looks at him with open-mouth observation, as the other three Amigos' don't dare say a word. Suddenly, she gives Clarence a big kiss and says; "I love wild flowers. "

"It figures! Clarence remarks smartly as he puts his arm around her; looks into her eyes and says; there is more"

"What do you mean --- more? " Peg asked.

"Well, first thing first, Clarence clarified. With all those beautiful flowers in the garden, where the hell am I going to get wild flowers from --- around here? "

"Grow some, Mr. Smart-ass; she replied. Surprise me. I'm worth it! "

They all laughed as Clarence elaborated that there was a third business, which was illegal. Peg was somewhat disappointed, yet concerned. She was irritated but intrigued.

"Detail, details, she demanded; spit it out. "

"It's my idea. Serge confessed. I've been involved in book making, off and on --- my entire life. "

"Book-making? Of all the nerve, why didn't you say so in the first-place; she responded. My Granddaddy was one of the biggest Bookies in Cleveland --- fifty years ago. "

Wow, what a relief. Clarence thought. Should I ask her to dinner?

“Are you going to play your new song for Peg, the one that you wrote for her?” “The other three Amigos’ echoed in conspiracy, simultaneously.

“What song?” Peg asked anxiously.

“He practiced all last night, after the party.” Henry tattled.

“Well, Peg demanded with sparkles in her eyes. I’m waiting.”

“Thanks a lot guys,” Clarence mumbles as he drags his heavy legs over to the Baby Grand and, without hesitation --- belts out ‘Destination Love’; flawlessly.

Destination Love

I’m on a mission
 An old tradition
 My destination is your love
 I got my eyes on you
 I got my mind on you
 My target is your heart
 I’m gonna wine you and dine you
 Treat you oh so right
 Each day and every night
 Cause I’m on a mission
 An old tradition
 Destination --- Love

I’m gonna whisper sweet nothings
 And think of the some things
 That’ll sweep you off your feet
 You’ll get lots of hugs and kisses
 And I’ll even do the dishes
 If that’s what it takes
 To generate --- a spark
 And penetrate --- your heart
 Cause I’m on a mission
 An old tradition
 Destination --- Love

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I got my eyes on you
I got my mind on you
My target is your heart
I'm gonna wine you and dine you
Treat you oh so right
Each day and every night
Cause I'm on a mission
An old tradition
Destination --- Love

So fall with me
And we'll be
Destination --- Love
It's just a mission
But what a mission
Destination --- Love

Clarence was quite the crooner as his serenade was fascinating, a welcomed surprise which summoned curiosity. When he finished wooing Peg, the other Three Amigos' were proud as they envied their pal. Needless to say, the crowd cheered and applauded; including four men from the Phone Company, who were eyeballing the bar.

Peg was awe-struck in beatify as Mr. Charisma literally swept her off her feet and enraptured her heart.

"Oh, she screamed as she ran over and jumped into his arms conceding --- It's Beautiful, Simply Beautiful."

They made such a cute couple. Their love for each other was quite obvious as they locked lips and gazed into each other's eyes --- intoxicated.

"Drinks are on the house, yelled Serge. It's party time ---- again, a habitual event"

Even the telephone crew joined in --- gladly. Somebody put a CD in and soon, the dance-floor was packed; including the two Lovebirds as well as Henry and Lucy.

Ironically, it was Lucy whom drug Henry out to the dance-floor as Max and Serge egged him on. Peg pointed to the pair as she and Clarence swayed with the music. He laughed, then she whispered into his ear; “incidentally, I can hook you up with both a web-site-designer and a wholesale lingerie supplier whom also deals in joy-toys and dirty-movies. “

“Ooh, Clarence fantasizes; connections and a bit naughty. I think I like that. Any more secrets you wanna confess? “

“I take the fifth.” She pleaded.

“I suppose you’re computer savvy too!” He joked.

“But of coarse.” She replied.

He kisses her and tells her that she is a God-sent. Then he asked; “are you? “

“Am I what?” She giggled.

“My Girl”!

“I hope so, she consents; we both have the same destination --- LOVE. And besides, I don’t dance with just anybody. “

“You don’t make exceptions? “

“Only with your permission “, she assured.

“Will you marry me?” He asked sincerely from his heart.

“You drive a hard bargain; “she hesitated. “ Let me sleep on it “

“Take your time, he backed off. I got a few good years left. “

They both laughed until Clarence is rudely interrupted as he is called upon to instruct the phone men. He kisses Peg on her forehead and says, “see ya later kid.” “

“I’ll be waiting Pops “, she affirms as she is in 7th Heaven, wedding-bells dancing in her head. Clarence does an about-face to go tend his business, but suddenly he yells back to her --- “Dinner tonight! I’ll pick you up 8 PM, sharp. “

“Aye, Aye Sir; “she shouts back as she goes off making her rounds!

The residents welcome Peg with open-arms. They sense her sincerity, her compassion. But a few are jealous that she is Clarence's girl. Peg has to earn Eva, Edna and Betty's confidence, their friendship. Until then, her Relationship with them is unremarkable as time runs its course.

The staff is somewhat skeptical of their new boss. They were impressed with the way she allured Clarence and was impartial amongst the other Amigos'. They realized that she would run a tight ship as they already seen her put two doctors in their place. She had clout and they knew it. She was proactive and proved to be productive.

Clarence was late for lunch as he was held-up --- learning the different communication systems. I'm too old for all this complicated technology, he thought. But ah, cheer up Pops; you got a date tonight with Peg.

Suddenly, reality set in. What am I going to wear? Where should I take her? Wild Flowers? It's been such a long time since I had a real concern. God, has it been ten years since my wife died? Time sure flies as life goes on and on and on regardless of the loss of a loved one. You learn to accept it, but you never get over it.

"Well, well, look whose here, the crooner himself. " Exclaimed Henry as Clarence joined his pals in the mess hall.

"We thought you were pumping iron or having your back shaved or something relating to your date tonight. " Serge teased.

"Don't forget your Viagra. " Max warned. "Are you going to take Peg to the 'O-Zone'? "

"Non-Sense, absolutely not, don't be so crude; Clarence snapped. She's not like Sexy-Sue. Romance is a different ball game, its major-league stuff. I'm playing for keeps! "

"Does she know about the 'O-Zone'? " Henry asked with worry on his face.

"We forgot to tell her! " Max cried.

"Not to worry, Serge assured. It's just a little consenting, adult --- fun and games. She will understand."

Max and Henry agreed with hesitation. But Clarence was nervous. Especially after witnessing how furious she was when she thought that Henry was a pervert. "I'm glad you need an ID card to enter. He confessed. I couldn't imagine her walking in there by accident. She'd probably flip out and quit. I better warn her tonight. "

Ironically, Peg was just a few tables away --- helping some resident with a walker. She caught the last part of their conversation. On her way out the mess hall, she smiled at Clarence and said. "Lucy informed me all about your 'O-Zone 'and rest assured; I shall stay clear --- Away. "

Clarence was relieved, he felt as if some burden was lifted, as if he confessed some dirty secret. But, why, he never even participated in the 'O-Zone '? Honesty was his only policy. You could ask Sexy-Sue whom he turned down more than once.

Clarence was old fashion as he never pretended to be something he wasn't. To him, phoniness was taboo. To each his own but don't push your Luck. He minded his own business and despised classical fools --- hypocrites. He firmly believed that hypocrisy, was the root to evil as controversy was the spice of life until, the 'Truth Sets Man Free '. He was grateful for his Amigos! True relationships are Sacred. Alas, he smiled, as he knew that he was right where he was supposed to be in Life. The other Three Amigos' just laughed as they realized that Clarence was delivered from stress.

"So, Henry asked; where are you taking Peg on your really special happening? "

"I haven't any idea, he confessed. I haven't been on a real date since my wife. God, I need help; an agenda. I feel somewhat insecure. But, I shall prove adept at exceeding by my Will to Love"! "

"Just relax, Max suggested; let Nature take its course. You gotta pace yourself. If I didn't have this bum-leg, I'd go in your place! "

"Like hell you would, Clarence responded defensively. Don't be so absurd. I'm going to marry that woman. "

"Marriage; Serge asked? Why you two don't know anything about each other. "

“Love speaks for itself! Clarence clarified. I already proposed and, she is going to sleep on it! “

“Wow, the ‘M’ - Word! God, this is Serious, Henry surmised. Shall we head for the bar and celebrate? “

“We can’t, Clarence reminded them. We have phone-calls to make and I have to educate you guys about the new technology. Peg is going to take care of Erotic Delights. We’re almost ready for business. “

“Entrepreneurs; Henry shouted! Who would have ever figured? I’ve been retired for over twelve years. “They all laughed as they headed upstairs to attend to last minute details. By supptime, all systems were --- go; for both the Bookmaking Operation and the Laugh Room. Commercials for 1-900-SEX-CHAT would air tonight --- for Friday and Saturday nights. Rumor already spread throughout the commune. Everywhere you looked, you’d see groups of elders, laughing, joking and practicing on each other. The anticipation was anxious, as they couldn’t wait to get involved.

The Four Amigos’ couldn’t believe their eyes or ears as they encountered a bunch of old pretending perverts, on their way to the bar to check out Serge’s phone lines. He was extremely pleased with the new system behind the bar. It was state of the art and its automatic point-spreads would save him allot of time. He assured the Guys that they’d get plenty of action --- starting tomorrow as word is already out on the streets. He had contacts and connections to cover any unbalanced bets. They couldn’t lose, as the 10% ‘vig’; was a sure thing --- cash money in the bank.

“Cash makes me nervous. Henry admitted. It sends mixed signals; it’s an invitation to danger. “

“Relax! Serge tried to reassure. Tomorrow, we’ll be armed and dangerous.” They all laughed as all Four Entrepreneurs were glad that they would be getting their pistols. But they weren’t so happy with their new cell-phones? Perhaps they were old-fashioned. Perhaps they didn’t want to be bothered. Regardless, they all agreed that both the guns and the phones were necessary evils -- vital to Social Security.

“It’s almost 6PM Romeo, Henry warned. You better shit, shower and shave; or else. “

“Damn, already; Clarence mumbled. Where the hell am I going to find wild flowers in two hours? “

“Good Luck! “ Serge interjected.

“Thanks, Clarence replied. “ I need a miracle to pull this off.”

“Do you want me to call Peg and tell her that you are sick with cold feet? “ Max harassed.

“Ha, ha, ha; “Clarence responded!

Suddenly, Lucy enters the bar with a beautiful bunch of Wild Flowers, a bottle of Asti and a Poetic Card. Clarence’s face lit up and glowed with delight.

“Thanks Lucy! I owe you --- Big Time. Where the heck did you find them? “

“At the lake; Passion Point. They thrive there. Peg would love it; you might even get lucky. “She replied.

“OK, Ok; “Clarence blushed. “ But how did you know about my predicament? “

“You can thank your Amigos’. Lucy confessed. Henry gave me the scoop --- after Peg flew out of here. It was their idea to rescue you. Besides, we all like Peg. We decided to surprise you, help you make it a memorable night. “

““One for all and all for one; ““Henry exclaimed!
“Share and share alike; “Max joked.

“When you’re in Love, Serge added; you don’t think before you act. So we did the thinking for your date. We dispatched the driver to take Peg home early! “

“We chipped in and bought you a new suit, shirt, under-ware, socks and tie. “ Max informed.

“I took your favorite old blue suit with me for an example. Lucy admitted. The tailor assured me that it would be a perfect fit. It’ll be delivered here at 7:15. “

“And, Henry announced; you have dinner reservations for two at the Lobster’s Claw for 9PM. The night driver is going to chauffeur you Lovebirds. “

Clarence was emotionally misty-eyed. He was speechless. Serge pulled out a fresh bottle of Jack and Lucy and the Guys toasted --- Good-Luck to Clarence; whom literally cried. He was grateful but mere words couldn't explain his gratitude. They all understood as he smiled, wiped his face with his sleeve and walked upstairs to get ready.

As he left, Lucy yelled: "don't worry, that Jack will put lead in your old pencil! "

The suit came on schedule. Henry got the honors to take it to Romeo. When Clarence came down at 7:30, the living room was crowded with curiosity as everybody was waiting to greet him. Even Marge and Thomas, whom sat in a wheel chair, were there.

Clarence looked stunning --- dashing and debonair. He got plenty of whistles and cheers as he waved and exited with the night-driver --- for his Date with Destiny; the Moment of Truth.

They arrived at Peg's home right on time. Both were impressed with both the house and the neighborhood. God, Clarence thought; she must be worth mega-bucks? She couldn't possibly afford this place on her salary.

"Maybe she is a high-class hooker by night? " The driver joked. Clarence was simply appalled, really pissed at Gino. He was chewing nails and spitting screws.

"Watch your mouth son, or I'll shove my fist down your throat. That is no way to talk about a lady. "

"Sorry Sir! But, I was only kidding"; replied the so-called chauffeur.

"Forget about it. Clarence calmed down. But remember, he continued; it's nice to be nice! "

Mr. Charisma was quite a gentleman. He rang Peg's bell with the flowers hid behind his back. Both were awed when she opened her door. Peg was absolutely gorgeous --- all dolled-up, and was pleased at how handsome Clarence was --- all clean-shaved and slicked-up. He looked so suave but he felt vulnerable as he was tongue-tied by her elegant beauty.

He handed her the flowers in silence. She giggly-screamed like an adolescent --- “oh, they’re so beautiful “; and thanked him with a great big kiss. Finally, after gaining his composure, Clarence cleared his throat and declared that they had dinner reservations at 9PM.

“I hope you like lobster?” He asked.

“Adore it!” She admitted.

“Alrighty then, cause we’re headed to the Lobster’s Claw”.

“Oh my, she replied; that is my favorite restaurant. “

“Great; “He was relieved! Peg put the wild flowers in a vase of water, grabbed her purse, a light sweater and put on the burglar alarm as they headed to the caddy. Once inside the vehicle, Peg commented on its license plates. “What does the ‘B4HEART’-acronym stand for?” She asked.

“I had them made up. Clarence admitted articulately. They’re special plates. They have special meaning to me. It’s my philosophy, my ideology, and my dream. Everybody should --- Be for Humanity Envisioned And Realized Together! “

“Wow! Peg responded; that’s profound.”

“Thanks. Clarence replied. But, Life itself is --- Profound.

“Nice neighborhood, “Clarence remarked as they drove off. He was dying to know.

“I’ve been here for twenty years. She replied. My late husband was a state Supreme Court Judge. He died two and a half years ago. It was a heart-attack. I guess he couldn’t handle the heat in the bedroom. “

Clarence was stunned and it showed. He felt awkward as he thought. God, is she kinky? Can I handle her? Shit, maybe she’d kill me in bed too?

“I’m only kidding she laughed. But he did die of a heart-attack. And besides, I owed you that for this morning and for not warning me about the O-Zone. “

They both laughed as the driver drove in complete silence. They exchanged bits and pieces of their lives as each achieved respect for the others sentimental attachments. After all, Memories are Precious. Before they knew it, they were at the restaurant.

Dinner turned out to be quality time. They really got to know more about each other and both their families. Sometimes discovery can be erotic. Both were completely relaxed. The ambience was exquisite. The food was incredibly delicious but, neither had any room for any dessert. Perhaps the bottle of Asti had had something to do with it.

They didn't stay for dancing, as they didn't want to tie up the driver. Besides, it was a beautiful night and they agreed to hang out in the Garden for a while at Social Security. After all, it had a surround sound system and Clarence had another bottle of Asti just waiting to be indulged. They could dance there under the stars. It sounded Romantic as Love was in the Air.

When they got back to the commune, Clarence made it clear to the driver that he himself would personally take Peg home in his car. The driver was relieved. In fact, unbeknownst to Clarence or Peg, he planned on quitting the next day. I guess he put his foot in his mouth once too often ---- OOPS.

The couple walked out back to the garden. Clarence was so proud of his girl. Peg couldn't believe how sweet he actually was. She never met anybody so sincere and full of compassion for others. He was so unique, so smooth, amiable, well rounded. He was an original, a keeper. She wondered if he would make a move and proposition her?

Perhaps I am a bit naughty, she laughed as she wondered how big his pedigree was. She wanted to check out his package. She was willing but she figured that he was too shy --- yet.

Suddenly, a shooting star falls across the sky. It was a sight for bedroom-eyes. A Divine Sign, which set the mood as, they embraced passionately; until they realized that they had company. Marge just smiled from across the garden as she politely left so that they would be alone.

"Poor woman, Clarence cried; she is mortified. I feel so bad for her. This garden seems to be the only thing that comforts her."

"Lucy told me all about her nightmare. Peg informed. It is so sad. She seems so lonely, so withdrawn?"

“Unfortunately, Clarence interrupted; she alienated herself in guilt and shame? She blames herself for being sexuality molested? “

“Sometimes, Peg surmised, life can be so unfair? “
 “Perhaps, Clarence replied; ‘but what goes around, comes around’. So I wasn’t surprised when I learned that the sinister bastard-lowlife that terrorized her; got his last week. Three skinheads raped and beat him to death in jail on some work-detail.”

“Karmic Justice; “Peg surmised!

“Amen! Clarence agreed. Poetic Justice! “

“Got any music Maestro? “ Peg asked, as she looked up at all the stars twinkling brightly in the sky.

“But of course, Clarence assured. We best not waste this precious moonlight. “

He left briefly to turn on the surround-sound and returned with two glasses and a chilled bottle of Asti. They toasted to the Full Moon in the night horizon and then, they danced and danced from one end of the garden to the other --- to the beat of their hearts. It was a Cosmic Chemistry. Ironically though, Clarence forgot to turn on the music.

Suddenly, Clarence starts to laugh as he realizes that he was absent-minded. Peg just smiles and says “Yes I will!” Clarence is confused. “I forgot the music. “

“It doesn’t matter. She insisted. Didn’t you hear what I just said? “

“Wha, What“?

“Yes, she replied, I’ll marry you! “
 Needless to say, that led to another passionate embrace, which was all it took for Clarence to invite Peg to spend the night in his room. She accepted and they Consummated their Love.

It was a perfect night, quite memorable and so rejuvenating; thanks to a little help from their Amigos’ and --- Mother Nature. In the morning, when she awoke, Peg felt awkward; perplexed in an embarrassing dilemma. She wasn’t accustomed to being mischievously permissive. Neither was Clarence. But, they were in Love. They trusted their hearts and each other.

They cuddled and found comfort in setting a wedding-date. They were grateful spirits, glad that they found each other. They made passionate love again before they got dressed.

At breakfast --- in the mess hall, the guys wanted to know all about his date and especially the intimate details. But Clarence wasn't one to kiss-n-tell. He was direct and to the point. He thanked them for their thoughtfulness, which led to a wonderful date. Then he announced; "we're getting married! She said yes! "

They all congratulated him as he gave them the date and word spread fast --- throughout the commune. Ironically, rumor hadn't even spread --- yet, that Peg spent the night. She had her uniform and work shoes in her assigned locker, so nobody suspected the contrary.

Clarence promised to drive her home when she finished her shift of duty and that is how the cat got out of the bag. Prior to that, only a few knew but they were content with minding their own business, as they kept silent. Sometimes silence is golden.

However, neither Clarence nor Peg gave a damn. After all, she was Sassy and he was Bold. They didn't care what others thought, as it was their business, their lives. Together, they made a perfect couple, Soul Mates; willing to take on the world if necessary.

After the Amigos' finished their morning meal, they piled into Clarence's Buick. They were nervous yet anxious about qualifying for their pistol permits. Everybody; except Serge whom was an expert with firearms. It was a new county requirement but thanks to some help from Chi and a quick call from Peg to an influential judge; an acquaintance, they had permission to be eligible for a carrying license --- personal protection. Being old and entrepreneurs, was power for their cause.

Unfortunately, not all of the Guys qualified. Serge put the instructor to shame. Clarence and Max were both quite impressive. But the five-hour course proved depressing for Henry. He couldn't hit the broad side of a barn.

"Maggie's Drawers; "Serge joked every time he missed the target!

Henry got frustrated. It was so annoying. However, as it turned out, his eyes were the culprits. Old glasses or cataracts were the suspects. Henry felt better when the instructor assured him that he could come right back and qualify again as soon as he got his eyes corrected. He was pleased that he wouldn't have to wait for the six-week background check.

"Maybe I'll take you as a pinochle partner again! Max joked. I owe your brain an apology. Your eyes weren't cooperating. "

"Ha, ha," Henry laughed in comic relief.

With permits in hand, three quarters of the Amigos' purchased their pistols right then and there on the second floor at the shooting range. Even Henry picked his out in anticipation of future results. Ironically, they all bought forty-fives, with a clip which held fourteen rounds. But Max had to be different as he insisted on having a quick-release-spring-fed-holster.

"El'Caramba", he shouted as he named his piece, his new sidekick!

The Comrades in Arms felt powerful on the ride back to the Commune. They respected their persuaders, their new items. Even Henry felt safer. But little did they know what a blessing in disguise; they would turn out to be. For at that moment, malignant forces were in cohorts, plotting in conspiracy to rob Social Security.

The night driver was so coy, cold and callused. He called Lucy and told her that he had to quit. He said that his father was dying --- out on the West Coast. He said to tell Clarence that he was sorry about last night. But in actuality, he was infuriated and jealous about Clarence. He wanted revenge if not compensation for his macho remarks. Gino feared Clarence as he was a coward with a vendetta.

Unfortunately, he had the audacity to recruit others to do the dirty deed. He masterminded in premeditation and engineered the whole scheme. The article in the front page of the local newspaper about Social Security's' \$ 10,000,000.00 donation was convincing proof. It was all the inspiration and motivation they needed to get involved. How malicious could they be? Brutal potential, probable cause; destined to be?

Ironically, idle minds can be dangerous, very dangerous when they have empty pockets as the devil dances in their heads --- Subtle Insistence. “Easy marks, he assured his younger brother Lou and his two crack-head friends, Derek and Dennis. Pushovers’; a quick fix! I’ll get you in and out as I lay it all out for you guys. Just tell the guard at the gate that you are here to surprise your Uncle Clarence Charisma. ”

“I’ll drive the get away-car. All you gotta do is follow my instructions. Trust me; Gino will never stir you wrong; he assured them. When you get in there, you must grab the Amigo’s, see --- remember these faces, tattoo them in you brain! “

He made them memorize their picture, which was in the paper. “They are always in the bar playing cards at the time we plan on striking. Put a gun to Clarence’s head; he is the leader. Him! “He pointed.

“Then take them upstairs on the third floor, pistol-whip them until they open the office and get the money out of the safe. They’re all loaded, he continued; you should see Clarence’s girlfriend’s customized house. It has the best of everything. And the restaurant that I took them to last night was high-class. Big-time!“

The would-be thieves were getting excited as their adrenaline was a flowing. Gino was pumping them up. He was a corrupt and demoralizing lost soul. “Kill Clarence if you gotta make an example. Then they’ll know that you mean business. It’s easy money! Take the whole shebang. “

“Yah; Lou put his two cents in; I hear that old people don’t trust banks because they can’t forget about the Great Depression! “

“Yah man!“ “Yah!“ “Yah!“ They all agreed as they decided to pull it off tonight.

The Amigos’ arrived back home just in time for Clarence to drive Peg home. They were all famished yet surprised when they realized that Peg spent the night. They were cool as Bold and Sassy left together.

On the way to Peg's, they stopped for pizza and exchanged details about their separate day. Peg felt sorry for Henry but was glad that the Guys were armed. She even confessed that she too was packing. When they pulled up to her drive, she got a sudden-urge and invited Clarence in --- for a quickie. He accepted; they did the wild thing and he left. They were both exhausted since they were up all night.

On the way back to Social Security, Clarence got his second wind from his ego, which felt great. Three times in twenty-four hours, he bragged to himself! Maybe Jack does put lead in your pencil? Fuck that Viagra shit. Maybe I'll take it in ten years or so.

It was a quiet night. Henry introduced Phil, the new driver whom Peg hired. He was pre-approved and qualified. Nobody suspected anything about Gino, who quit.

Clarence was harassed and pressed for details, relating to him and Peg. But he was a gentleman, always discreet. He was the center of conversation as gossip and whispers prospered until destiny struck.

The guard at the gate phoned the new driver, instructing him to open the door for three unexpected visitors from out of town --- who were there to surprise their Uncle Clarence. He was told to let them in quietly so that he didn't spoil their awe.

The Amigos' were getting ready to play cards. Serge was behind the bar getting a new deck. The others were already seated at their favorite table when the three low lives recognized their prey by the etching embedded in their brains.

Gino's foot soldiers rushed into the bar armed with their marching orders and their guns drawn. Unfortunately, they had a rendezvous with death. Well, at least two of them did as the robbery was a possibility but, not probable as their plan proved implausible. For the Amigos' proved to be a force to be reckoned with, thanks to their elements of surprises.

It was an explosive situation as El'Caramba and the Comrades in Arms responded without any doubt. They were a team, a deadly combination that hit their marks. Unfortunately, the-wanna-be-thieves made the biggest mistake of their young lives when one grabbed Clarence and put a gun to his head. Without hesitation --- instinctively, Clarence gave him a cocoa-butt with the back of his head --- breaking his nose as he flipped him ten feet over his shoulder.

The other two panicked as Max fell to the floor, cast exposed. They didn't pay any attention to him as he pulled out El'Caramba and shot one of the crack-head's right in the heart while Serge put a bullet in the middle of the other crack-head's eyes. Both collapsed dead --- instantly.

Clarence finished his reaction as he dropped to his knees and shot Lou in the stomach as he jumped up to his feet in utter shock; nose dripping blood. Clarence stood up slowly. He was sweating profusely, contrary to the bone-chilling ordeal.

Serge felt his pulse. "He is alive but it's critical. Gut-shot wounds are dangerous. It's touch and go." Somebody called the police whom arrived quickly as they were patrolling the area. The guard and Phil felt like fools as it took four old men to foil the planned plot in motion.

"Maybe, Serge exclaimed; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was right. Maybe someday 'Unarmed Truth' and 'Unconditional Love' will prevail? But until then, I'll keep 'El'Caramba's' Cousin. "

"I need a shot of Jack Denials! Henry confessed. I think I shit my pants. "

"Me too "; Max admitted as he puked his guts out!

"Poor bastards; Clarence added as he shook his head. Misguided victims of ignorance? Misspent Youth? What a waste! Set up a Round Serge! "

Serge obliged and the Four Amigos tried to regain their composure.

"Fuckin Bone-Heads, Max cried. They never got the chance to realize that if you live a lie, you die a fool. Now they're 'Dead-Heads'; -- Literally. I hope that other bastard makes it. "

Chapter Four --- Uncertainty

Needless to say, it was ugly chaos --- a variety of disorders, reeking havoc. People fainted, some cried, others were in literal shock or disbelief. Blood was all over the place. It was a living nightmare, a gruesome sight --- two dead bodies and one clinging to life in pure pain, wailing like a baby. Finally, Lou was rushed off to the hospital in an ambulance.

Dozens of crime-scene investigators littered the commune. They taped off the death display, took pictures and drew chalk marks. Then, they took statements for hours, right, wrong and indifferent as perspective varies.

The coroner from the county medical examiners office bagged and hauled the bodies away after he got the OK from investigators. Clarence was told to hold off on the clean up and to keep the door locked.

Nobody slept that night as reporters from televisions and papers swarmed outside, like bees. Both Peg and Lucy heard about it on TV and came back to help out. The guard and the police suspected a forth suspect, an accomplice; a get-away driver. They'd seen a car peel off and flee the scene without its lights on.

Clarence became suspicious when he learned Lou's last name --- DeAngelo. The detectives apprehended Gino and brought him to the station for questioning. He took the fifth, hoping that they all died so that they couldn't finger him. And then, he declined a lawyer, bragging that he'd be released in forty-eight hours --- by law.

Peg couldn't believe that for the second time in three days, the Commune and the Amigos' made the front page of the local newspaper. Ironically, it was the first article that instigated this outrageous incident. Social Security was targeted because of it.

Chi stopped in while Peg was having coffee and reading the culprit's latest piece. He couldn't believe --- all the press and news crews, hanging outside. "No Comment!" He echoed several times before he entered. Except for the day staff, everybody else was upstairs --- trying to get some sleep. Even Lucy was up there; as was exhausted from trying to calm everybody down. It was one hell of a night.

Chi assured Peg that the deaths were justifiable homicide --- self-defense amid a felony in progress --- armed-robbery. "The Amigos' are Heroes in the Eyes of the Law!" He said. Common Sense dictates that they were Victims, so called easy prey --- exposed to Evildoers. "

Peg felt relieved. She thanked him and he told her that he'd be back later to talk with the Amigos. He also promised to put some pressure on the press to --- Back-Off. Then he left.

At 9AM, the new gardener reported for duty. Peg had another old acquaintance run a personal as well as a criminal background check on him. He was cleared as a stand-up guy --- responsible.

Max and Henry left the grounds at 10AM with the day driver. Max was getting his cast off and Henry needed his eyes checked. As it turned out, he only needed new glasses.

Several detectives came back at about 11 AM with some lab equipment. "Just routine"; one assured Lucy! Then he gave her the OK to have the area cleaned. She called a professional cleaning company.

By supertime, Max had his cast off, Henry was Hawk-Eye and the bar was spic and span. At dinner, Serge informed the Guys that in spite of the horrific night, the book-making operation was a success. They took in \$ 8500.00 in action. \$850.00 was their profit. "Not bad for our first day of business!" He commented. Then he estimated the weekly profits to be roughly \$ 8,000.00; explaining double action on the weekend.

The Amigos were pleased, but they were still in shock, as his prediction didn't even excite any of them. Serge was just doing his duty, keeping them informed and trying to cheer them up. Actually, he also felt depressed as he was sickened by the whole incident.

Chi stopped back at 7 PM. He was pleasantly pleased when he heard that Clarence and Peg were getting married. One of the residents spilled the beans. He congratulated his Grand-Father whom asked him to be his best man. He accepted with honor. Then he assured the Amigos that neither they nor the Commune had anything to worry about.

He told them that the police already closed the case. Lou made it through surgery. He is going to be all right. But he was hysterical when he found out that Derek and Dennis were dead. "That Fucken Gino! He screamed from the top of his lungs; it's all his fault as it was his idea; he was our getaway driver. "

"I knew it! " Clarence's mouth dropped.

"Relax Pa, Chi interjected; he's a coward. He cried when the police arrested him for conspiracy, armed-robbery, and attempted murder. He denies everything and, he is mad at his brother for ratting him out. He threatened to get even with him for lying."

"Unfortunately, Chi continued --- he is in jail now but he'll probably make bail. However, the good news is that the two deaths are officially ruled as justifiable homicide --- self-defense."

The Amigos were relieved. But Clarence was concerned about the bail issue. He didn't trust Gino. He knew that he didn't have any previous record but he believed him to be a walking-time-bomb. Something about him the first time they met? His cockiness but Clarence never expected his homicidal tendencies?

Thus, Clarence felt guilty. He was sorry that he didn't trust his intuition as he wondered if Gino infiltrated Social Security --- just to case it out. Chi and the others agreed with his rational and vowed to be alert. Chi assured them that he would warn them if and when he made the bail. Then, he left.

The following morning, Henry went back to qualify for his forty-five. His Buddies cheered him on as he became an elite member of the Comrades in Arms. He didn't get into Maggie's Drawers but technically, he was still a virgin, as he didn't have any notches on his belt. Regardless, he felt the power and the prestige of his 'Enforcer'.

““Make my day””; he thought to himself, referring to Gino. Henry was oh so ready to --- Rumble. Let him just try something. Anything; I’ll be waiting. Ironically, at that moment, Clarence got a call from Chi --- “Gino just made bail? “

When they got back to Social Security, they went to the bar and toasted to Henry --- ‘all for one and one for all ‘. They seemed to put the Bloody Incident to rest as they soaked in the sauce? Perhaps the Jack, El’Caramba and his three cousins calmed their nerves but, Gino was on each and every one of their minds.

They decided to have surveillance cameras installed and motion detectors throughout the outside perimeter and in the hallways and main lobbies as A --- Round the Clock Surveillance. They all agreed that just the sight of them would be deterrents, which would make Gino think twice and ease the Fear-Factor.

Suddenly, the phone behind the bar rings. Serge answered and took some bets for that night. When he hung up, he said; “incidentally, we made \$975.00 last night.”

“Easy money; Max replied!”

“We’ll make close to two grand tonight! Serge assured. Payday always makes people itchy. Money burns holes in their pockets. TGIF, its party time --- sex, drinking and gambling; all weekend long.”

“Shit; yelled Clarence. It’s Friday? We have to get ready for tonight’s action in the Laugh Room.”

“Oh God, Henry responded, with all the commotion around here the last two days, I forgot about it.”

“Me too “, echoed Serge as Max nodded.

”I better remind Peg. “ Clarence thought out loud.

“I’ll remind Lucy. Henry vowed. She said that she wouldn’t miss the debut for anything.”

“I’ll give her some JD, Clarence interjected sarcastically, it’ll oil her pencil sharpener”.

They all stated to laugh. All but Henry whom seemed offended yet, too meek and shy to say anything?

“I heard that Lucy and Peg were working with all the residents --- regarding the perverted performances. Max exclaimed. They all agreed that if somebody got a good one, they’d put it on speakerphone so that everybody could get a good laugh as the others busy out. “

“How many calls do you guy’s think we’ll get? Serge asked curiously. How long will the conversations last? And, what should we say? “

“I don’t know. Henry acknowledged with ignorance. But the longer we keep them on the line the more we make. How many pervers are there in the world? “

“They are just lonely people. Peg interrupted as she handed Clarence some papers and a bunch of lingerie-catalogs to perusal. Some will be longing to get-off. It’s the same as Erotic Delight’s Joy-Toys, and your ‘O-Zone’. It’s only adult fun and games. But, a lot of the calls will be lonely people just looking for someone to talk to.”

“It would be cheaper for them to see a shrink. Max surmised as Clarence looked through the catalogs. \$4.95 a minute adds up quite fast. Don’t you think? “

“It’s convenient and private and besides, it’s their money! Lucy interjected. However, if and when lonely souls call, some of the residents agreed to get their phone numbers and call them back to talk for free. “

“Sounds like a plan; Clarence acknowledged! We’ll just play it by ear --- so to speak. We have plenty of ready, willing and able participants --- just raring to go. We have eight lines; six set up for male callers and two for females. But I hear that some are willing to disguise their voices and pretend to be the opposite sex. It should be interesting if not amusing. ‘May the force be with us;’ again. If somebody needs a little help getting-off, then so be it. ”

“But, Clarence warned as he continued. We better make sure that all residents realize that this is strictly fun and games. I don’t want anybody falling for some Sick-O, going out with him and getting hurt or perhaps even killed. We don’t need the money that bad. And, if and when we call back some old lonely soul and they become friends; I want them checked out --- first! “

Everybody agreed with Clarence’s concerns. They all vowed to keep an eye on all the other residents and decided that it would be a good safety measure to make it mandatory to work in pairs. There would be a meeting tonight at 7:30 to notify all the others and to address any other questions or suggestions.

“What do you think about the catalogs and the web-site proposal?” Peg asked Clarence as he passed them around to the others. “The catalogs and the price-lists are great. Clarence replied. And, this web-site layout is quite impressive. Go with it unless anybody has any objections. “

Nobody opposed or disapproved but Max suggested that Peg should model some of the lingerie for the Amigos’. Everybody laughed except Clarence whom was pissed until he changed the subject.

“Ladies; He shouted! We have a serious problem. Gino is out on bail. ”

The women were up-set to say the least. “Oh my; “they echoed in disbelief?

“We decided to get motion detectors and video cameras installed throughout the commune. “ Henry tried to reassure them and ease their tension.

“I’ll make some calls and have somebody out here first thing in the morning to install them! “ Lucy promised.

“Good. Peg sighed with relief. But, she continued; I don’t think he has the guts to come around here. He’s a chicken, purely yellow. He’ll probably flee the country. I don’t plan on losing any sleep over him. I have two calls to make, Erotic Delights shall be up and running in about a week or so. “

“We mustn’t take Gino lightly. Clarence warned. Consider him armed and deadly dangerous. He got the shit beat out of him in the holding-center. They almost raped him. The guards saved his ass. He is extremely bitter and scared as he has two black-eyes and a dislocated shoulder. There is no telling what on God’s Earth --- he plans on doing next. He’s a wounded savage with a wounded ego. There is legitimate cause for worry. “

“Worry shall get us no where, no how. Lucy advised We must focus, be alert and prepare. Yesterday is gone; tomorrow will come soon --- regardless. But in the meantime Clarence, don’t you fret about my old pencil sharpener. It doesn’t need any oiling from Jack. However, perhaps Henry could pacify her?”

“Wow, that sounds like a proposition if I ever heard one!”
 “Serge exclaimed with excitement as Henry was floored by shocking embarrassment --- again. “Why don’t you two; hook-up in the ‘O-Zone’! She’s drooling over your sexy physique.”

“Ha, ha, Henry snaps back. But my room will suffice. Whata you say Lucy, you wanna get lucky and stain my sheets? Are you in the mood --- for a little hanky panky?”

“Wait!” Max interrupts. “We can have a three-some in the ‘O-Zone’.”

“Not in this life time! Lucy shrieks as she sneers at Max. Not in your wildest dream would I even allow you to bite me ---- Never. She laughed. Not even if my life depended upon it.”

“Relax girl. I’m only fooling. I’m practicing for tonight. “Max backed off.

Everybody started to laugh and then, Lucy grabs Henry by the arm and says “let’s go get naked “, as she leads him off for some afternoon-delight.

“You go Girl!” Peg hollered as they exited the room. When they were out of sight, Peg informed the rest of the Amigos’ that Lucy was crazy about Henry from day one. She thought that he had a great set of buns. She tried her damndest to get his undivided attention but according to her, he was so bashful, shy and timid.

The three Amigo’s started to laugh as they recollected Henry’s style. Peg elaborated as she explained; “she confided in me yesterday, that she was going to make a drastic move --- soon. But, I never imagined that she’d be so blunt.”

“What the hell, Max interrupted, she made her move and now she is making Henry’s day. God Bless Her! After all, none of us is getting any younger. We best enjoy and make the best use of what time we have left.”

“I’ll drink to that!” Serge yelled as he went to fetch another round.

“Me Too“, echoed both Max and Clarence!

“Don’t forget about me; Peg reminded; Asti, please!”
 “But of coarse. “Serge replied as he granted their prerogatives and the four of them toasted to Henry and Lucy as well as Happiness.

7:30 PM rolled around fast. All were excited about show-time. Everybody except Henry and Lucy as Lucy never went home. She didn't even call for the surveillance cameras. She and Henry had to be woken up. They knocked each other out and fell fast asleep in each others arms. But when they awoke, they were energized, completely rejuvenated, as they both felt simply --- Great. It was an erotic encounter, vibrant, and healthy.

Tardy, the new item joined the rest of the Commune. The meeting was almost over but, they got a standing-ovation. Max wanted to know if Lucy was free tomorrow afternoon. Henry made it perfectly clear that she was now officially off-limits as a romance was in bloom.

Sexy Sue acknowledged that she was free and they, Max and her; made a date for the 'O-Zone'. Another couple offered to join them and they accepted. Ironically, Sue warned that she had only one rule when it came to sex.

"What is it?" Max asked curiously.

"The 24/7 Rule; she replied! I'm Ready, Willing and Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. I'm a gluten for porn; Punish me Baby, Consent is my middle name. "

"But, she continued, I want it on record that I never had any STD's. However, I must confess --- I did have crabs --- once. It was way back at Woodstock. I got them from some musician's mustache. One of the band members even wrote a song about it entitled 'Crabs In My Mustache', and blamed it on me?"

Everybody laughed! Even --- Marge as Sue was a true slut, a Bonafide Nymphomania and Proud of It. Nonchalantly, Serge yelled, "Drinks are on the house! Does the Sexaholic want a double?"

"Are you trying to get me drunk and take advantage of my innocence?" She joked in preparation for the performance.

Peg suggested that Sue be in charge of the Laugh-Room. Everyone agreed since there wasn't anything that she didn't know about sex. Besides, she was dressed for the part as usual --- red-wig, make-up galore, cheap perfume and a skimpy negligee. She was every bit a woman, pleasantly plump, a round-rump and huge-knockers.

Suddenly, Peg remembered why Sexy Sue looked so darn familiar. She couldn't place her at first. After all, she did put on a few pounds. Quite a few to be exact, but now it was perfectly clear. Ironically, they partied together with the same band at Woodstock.

Peg started to sweat profusely as she became quite uncomfortable. What will Clarence think? 'Sexy Sue' and 'Piggy Peg'? Woodstock was her wilder days. That's when she got knocked-up with her illegitimate-daughter-Helen. It was her secret. Not many knew but she was dying to tell Clarence --- before the wedding.

Shit, she thought to herself. Should I come clean now and reminisce with Sue? Or should I confess in private? Perhaps I better sleep on it, and decided between guilt or shame.

Unfortunately, her decision wasn't that easy as Helen was on her mind. She is so beautiful and Mud-Bone John has been a good father as well as provider as his generosity is outrageously beyond any expectation. He showered them both with gifts and luxury trips over the years. Actually, it was just a drop in the bucket as he could afford it.

"You can't spoil a child!" He always insisted as he welcomed his 'Little Princess' with open arms when he found out -- three years after the fact. Unfortunately, he was overseas touring with his band when Peg got married to save-face and protect her reputation. She married an older gentleman, a wonderful husband and understanding father as Peg did her best and abortion was never an option.

"What are STD's?" "Whispered Betty as Eva and Edna giggled in confusion. Peg explained: "Sexually transmitted diseases; "as they all blushed in silence.

Suddenly, Lucy realized that she forgot about her promise, her obligation. Peg assured her that it was alright since she took care of it. A crew from Security Plus would be here at 8 AM tomorrow morning. They were familiar with Social Security's plight via the newspaper.

Lucy was relieved but apologized for her negligence. Everybody forgave her as it was an Understanding Commune. After all, helping, caring, and sharing, forgiveness, trust and respect were all woven in their hearts. Besides, she had a good excuse, 'The Call of the Wild'.

Every seat in the house was packed as disappointment never arrived. The phones rang and rang as laughter bounced back and forth --- off the walls. Sexy Sue proved to be an instant star, a seductive success with her clients whom vowed to call her again and again as she knew how to Talk-Dirty. She got more people off then all the other residents combined. She was a Pro.

"I'm coming, I'm coming", echoed off her speaker-phone as she ended each call. The entire commune was having the time of their lives. It was a sight to be heard. Humans can be such perverted creatures, so bizarre. We are but, strange animals with selective memories. Disgusting seems to be popular to pleasure.

"How big are your tits?" "Are you a bad girl?" "Will you masturbate for me?" "Can I knock at your back-door?" "You wanna drain my vain?" "Are you a bad boy?" "Can I check out your package?" "Can I ---?"

On and on it went as they took turns pacifying obscene urges. Some residents were naturals others were pathetically sad. Most callers were literally satisfied, pleasantly pleased. Some were disappointed but whose fault was it if they couldn't get it up or get off?

"You can satisfy some of the people all the time; said Sexy Sue as she paraphrased ol Abe. But you can't satisfy all the people all the time.' However I'm always willing and ready to try! Ironically, I've gone to bed --- broke, tired and hungry but, only a fool falls asleep --- Horny. All it takes is a little effort and allot of practice. "

Everybody roared as Sue could get raunchy but, she was honest. Lucy got the best call of the night which turned out to be the last. It was a hilariously gross finale. Some queer called and she pretended to be a guy. The caller wanted her to toss his salad. He insisted she describe how wonderful he smelled and tasted. It was all on the speaker-phone.

Lucy was utterly confused until Sexy Sue explained that he desired her to lick and suck his ass-hole/scrotum area until he came. She got lividly offended. "Go get a bottle of Jack Denials and down it till you toss your cookies! She shouted. Then stick the entire bottle up your naked-brown-eye, without Vaseline."

He thanked her as he screamed --- "God, I'm coming, I'm coming! " The entire commune was dying in delight as tears as well as bodies were rolling on the floor. Henry laughed so hard that his false teeth fell out. Max warned him to be careful tonight.

"Why?" He asked.

"Lucy might stick that bottle up your ass if you piss her off or don't satisfy her. " He chuckled.

If 'laughter is the best medicine'; then the commune was medicated for the rest of their lives. They were on such a high; they couldn't shake the rush as nobody was tired. Suddenly, Sue yells out loud --- "why does a dog lick his balls?" Nobody knew the answer. "Because he can," she enlightened!

It was 2:30 AM when they decided to dispatch the night driver. Clarence instructed him to fetch their bus and bring it out front, destination --- 'Denny's'. Sixty-three hungry entrepreneurs marched in including three in wheel chairs and two with walkers. Marge led the way as she wheeled Thomas through the door. He warned the manager that his establishment was being invaded as they filled both the entire smoking and non-smoking areas. Clarence paid with their corporate credit card.

It was almost 6 AM when the bus rolled back home. The cooks were pleased as coffee, tea, fruits and juices were about all that was requested. The 'Laugh Room'; was the center of conversation. To most of the Commune, it was a blessing, something to look forward to. It sparked a new interest as Social Security bonded in laughter via perversion.

By 7 AM, downstairs was a ghost town as most vanished to their rooms to catch a little shut-eye. Lucy bunked with Henry and Peg with Clarence. Max and Serge held the fort as they volunteered to instruct the crew from Security Plus.

In the mean time, they restocked the bar then went over the recites for the Bookmaking Operation and the 1-900-Sex-Chat. The sports betting netted just over two grand but, the action from the 'Laugh Room' blew their minds. It grossed \$10, 5000.00 in credit card transactions? After sales tax, charge fees, phone expenses and commercial advertising, they cleared \$ 7,800.00. Half of the Amigos' were elated. They couldn't wait to enlighten the others. They had a gold mine. They agreed that this called for a special celebration. Something erotic for the entire Commune as Cost was not an issue. Social Security deserved it.

Serge had a great idea. He had one of the most incredible experiences of his life --- Overseas in the Philipppians. "Besides the naked broads and the booze, he exclaimed, the natural hot-springs and mud-baths were out of this world. It was right after I received a 'Dear John Letter, from my wife. I thanked God that we didn't have any children and then, I died and was in Heaven on Earth! "

"Sounds like a plan; Max shouted with enthusiasm! We can propose it and put it up for a vote Monday, at the Commune's next council meeting. But, he asked, aren't there any natural hot springs here in the US? "

"Hell yah! Serge assured. I'll find us a nice hide-away. I figure \$ 2,000.00 a head ---round-trip for a week. "

The owner of Security Plus arrived at 7:45 AM with an entourage of three cargo-vans and a crew of six. They scoped and surveyed the grounds with Max and Serge. Henry and Clarence relieved them at noon as most of the residents were strolling down for lunch in their PJ's.

The Four Amigos' each had a Bloody-Mary together as Max and Serge updated the other two, then headed upstairs to crash. Neither Clarence nor Henry expected such results from either operation. Both were extremely pleased as they agreed with the forth-coming proposal. The Commune deserved to be rewarded indeed.

The outside perimeter was secured with cameras and motion detectors by 6 Pm. The Forman assured Clarence that they'd be back on Monday at 8 Am to finish inside and fine-tune everything. He went over the existing system with the Amigos' before he left.

Saturday night turned out to be an encore performance, so entertaining as well as profitable. In fact, both businesses made more money than the night before. Needless to say, everybody went straight to bed --- pronto as they were all literally exhausted and they had an outing tomorrow morning.

Instead of the customary brunch of Champaign, Bloody Mary's and buffet; Sunday's breakfast was plain and simple. The bus was on the road again by 9 AM as they were headed to the country for a picnic. It was a day of relaxation --- outdoors, reading, sunbathing, fishing and swimming. They arrived back home at 5 Pm, just in time for dinner.

By noon on Monday, all systems were go for the security system. Even new alarms were installed. The monthly council meeting commenced at 7 PM sharp. Since Henry was treasure, he went over all finances with the tribe except for the Bookmaking. It was illegal and the Amigos' didn't want any of them to get in trouble. He elaborated on the profits from 1-900-Sex-Chat. The residents went wild.

They were overwhelmed by Serge's proposal .He gave them three choices. He did some detective work and came up with options as well as prices. They decided to charter a privet plane for a 7-day round trip up in the Mountains in Aspen, Colorado. It would be perfect, hot and sunny in the day for mud baths and chilly in the night air so that they could appreciate the pleasure of the natural hot springs.

The air-fare was \$ 19,500.00 and the package price/group rate for room and three buffet meals at Paradise Lost was \$88,200.00. It was well below the \$ 2,000 a head goal and it was voted upon unanimously. However, they decided to hold off for a year. They didn't want to jeopardize the 'Laugh Room'!

Concerning the rest of the agenda, they declined a nudist-colony trip but agreed to have two separate trips to strip-joints; one for the guys and one for the gals. It seems that sex was a priority. Their final issue involved forming a Sun setting and Sun rising club. It was optional, as all you had to do was show up. When Henry adjourned the meeting, everybody pigged out on pizza and wings as usual.

On Tuesday afternoon, Peg assured the Amigos' that Erotic Delights would be up and running Monday. She was tending to final details. Clarence asked her if she wanted to do dinner and a movie. Lucy and Henry tagged along as they double-dated. Max had another date with Sexy Sue in the O-Zone and Serge disappeared as usual for a few hours.

By the time Wednesday rolled around, Gino had been stalking Peg for two days --- unbeknownst to her. He realized that Social Security was untouchable as he cased it out and witnessed all the surveillance. But he still wanted revenge --- now, ASAP as animosity ate his heart, poisoned his brain. Peg would do just fine. She and Lucy were the weak links. However, Lucy didn't have any real money.

He needed cash. He was running out of patience and frustrated. Jail scared the living shit out of him and he vowed --- "never to go back. " He just wanted to get the hell out of Dodge, leave the fucken country.

He decided to take forceful action with ill-will. His plan was to force himself on Peg, rob and kidnap her then, flee to Mexico. He knew where she lived, what time she was supposed to work as well as the route she took to and from the Commune. But since Clarence was her man, Gino never knew for sure if or when they'd go out together or spend the night with each other.

Thus, he had to play it cool, one day at a time --- watch her, lay low and creep about. His best option was to follow her until he could grab her in some secluded parking lot --- shopping or perhaps at the bank. "Relax; he told himself, I'll get that tight-ass bitch." He was a cold-hearted self-centered, deviant with no conscious sense of guilt or shame.

Unfortunately, Friday turned out to be 'D-Day'. Peg made a serious mistake. She didn't watch her back as she exited the bank and walked back to her car. Gino was oh so sly --- baseball-cap, dark sunglasses, just waiting for her to get in.

"Excuse me, he interrupted; do you have the time? " He asked as he disguised his voice.

"5:37, "she answered without any fear or concern.

"Wrong answer;" he retorted as he put a gun in her back!

“Gino; “she eked as her heart pounded a mile a minute? He pushed her to the side, opened the door and unlocked the back. “Get in Bitch! He commanded. It’s payback time.”

She got in the front and he sat in the back. She was scared to death. She feared him, especially since he seemed so desperate and out of control. He was shaking like a leaf, gun trembling against her back. She never matched wits with a moron but she was determined. She wasn’t looking for trouble but sometimes, it sneaks up on you as shit happens.

‘Tough Babe’, flashed in her head. It was her old nickname --- way back when she was a teen. Be strong, she told herself, calm down! Think! Now is not the time to fight back! “What do you want? She asked. I have Money! Take It! “

“Shut-up you fuckin slut! Hand me your purse, start the car and go straight to your house. “ She engaged the engine and proceeded as ordered. “Please don’t hurt me. She begged. I’ll do what ever you say. “

“You’re gonna blow me Bitch. “ He replied repulsively. “God, you’re so pathetic, so disgusting. “

“Don’t give me any of that God shit. You’re gonna need a miracle to save your sweet ass. Why don’t you look for a Burning-Bush! “He laughed.

“You don’t believe in God? “ She asked coyly. “Hell No, I don’t believe in anything that I can’t see, touch, hear, taste or smell. “ He replied arrogantly.

“Don’t you feel in your heart? What happened to your conscience? “ “I feel with my dick. A stiff dick hasn’t any conscience. “

“Don’t be so gross. “ Peg snapped at him. “Don’t tell me what to do or how to feel --- Bitch. “ He warned her.

“But; she insisted, Love makes the world go round! “ “Love is for fools. Gino disagreed. You have that perfect dream until you wake-up as reality sets in. Life is but a night-mare. “

“Do you mind if I pray? “ She asked. “Yah, yah, yah, pray all you want, but do it in silence. He laughed. In fact; he added, put the radio on --- now. “

She obliged and whispered an Our Father and a Hail Mary to herself as he ransacked her purse --- looking for cash, bankbooks, credit cards and weapons.

When she finished praying, her mind wandered as she thought of her daughter Helen as well as Clarence and their wedding plans and the Commune. God, Please Help Me, I have so much to live for.

Suddenly, she realized that she had to make a move or else. Soon she would be home. Suddenly, she had a plan as 'Desesperado' and her 'Trouble Bush', danced in her head. For she was a survivor, he was a total eclipse of a brain.

"Is this \$ 400.00 all the cash you got?" He asked disappointedly.

"I have a few thousand dollars at home."

"That's a start however; I'll need a lot more. I plan on staying out of jail and you're gonna help me. Your platinum credit cards should do the trick but I thought that you'd be packing heat. I guess you're too holy." He laughed again.

When Peg pulled into her long driveway, past the gate, she thanked Gino for allowing her time to pray. He grinned, eyes dazed in anticipation as he felt powerful. After all, he was in control now. Soon he'd be her master in the bedroom and she knew it.

"You think God's gonna help you? He asked. God is but a dog spelled backwards".

"I'm prepared for death. She replied. Are you?"

"I'm the one who has the gun! He bragged. But whatever happens; happens. Death can't be any worst than my life. Death is inevitable, Life is optional."

"I prayed for you!" She lied.

"Big deal, so does my mother and grand-mother. I went to catholic school for awhile, until they kicked me out cause my father died and my mother couldn't afford the tuition. At first, Father Dominic was oh so nice, so concerned. He made me an alter-boy. Then, he comforted me by giving me wine and sodomizing me. I was eleven years old. Where was God then when I needed him?"

Peg just shook her head in disbelief --- speechless. "He raped you?" "She asked in horror.

“It was my word against his. Go figure! He added. Nobody ever believed me and to add insult to injury; they through me out of the school? Why did God have to take my father? Why did the priest abuse me? You have no idea how hard it is growing up without a father. Talk about pathetic --- seeing your own mother working, praying and crying all the time; feeling sorry for us, for herself. I can’t even pity her, she’s lost in self-pity.”

“I’m truly sorry that she never remarried or even dated for that matter. She probably needed a good fucking or a good beating to knock some sense into her, bring her back to reality. Shit, God knows that my father kept her in line and on her toes. He beat the shit out of the three of us all the time.

Peg was shocked. Gino was bitter and he had a right to be since that evil parasite whom hid behind the cloth, fucked-up his mind as well as his life. But, she wasn’t about to let him fuck up hers!

“I’m sorry. She interrupted; Betrayed and literally priest-ridden? You poor ba “

“Don’t patronize me with pity bitch. You’re the one who has troubles now. ”

“Ah, but I have a Trouble Bush! Peg exclaimed. I never bring my troubles into my house. “

Gino scratched his head, perplexed. “A ‘Trouble Bush’; ‘he asked all confused?

“But of course; she replied. It’s a family tradition. I’m the third generation to practice it. It would be a mortal sin if you wouldn’t let me perform my religious ritual before we entered. Besides, you might learn something. What do you have to lose? “

He looked around; the area was secluded by Nature --- vines, brush and trees galore.

“Nothing! He hesitated as he got courage from fingering the gun which was hidden under his jacket that he was carrying. I am curious. But make it quick, you got a nice ass. I’m getting horny. “

It’s now or never, she thought to herself as they got out of the car simultaneously.

“Where is this ‘Trouble Bush’? He asked sarcastically. Next to your; ‘Burning Bush’? “

“Please, she pleaded, it’s a sacred routine. Can’t you be serious for just a few precious minutes?”

“Yah, yah, yah “, he pacified her as he bit his lip. “It is over there next to the porch. “ She pointed nervously. He followed her as she proceeded toward her elaborate plan. She just hoped that ‘Desesperado’ would come through.

When they reached the bush, she stopped and egged him on with reverse psychology. “Now don’t you dare laugh. It may seem stupid as it is a simple procedure but it makes me feel better. I’m at peace when I’m all finished. “

Gino couldn’t help himself as he started to giggle. Peg started to chant. “Om! Om! Om!“ Then she looked up into the sky, sun fading-off-West. She put her arms up into the air as if she was reaching for the stars.

Gino was getting bored. “Hurry-up; he mumbled. I gotta take a piss. “

Nonchalantly, Peg put her arms down to her side, looked over at Gino and smiled. Then she put them straight out over the top of her ‘Trouble Bush’ and started shaking them over and over and over again and again in a circular motion, shouting “ Be Gone, Be Gone, Go.”

Gino is more curious than before. He laughs and laughs as he thinks that she is crazy but, he is running out of patience’s.

“I’m shaking all my troubles away before I walk into my house. When I leave, I’ll pick them up off the bush and take them with me. It is a mutual agreement between me and the bush.”

“Enough is enough! “ He shouts as he moved closer towards Peg to stop this nonsense.

Suddenly, she screams from the top of her lungs --- ““Desesperado“! “

Gino jumps and she kicks him square in his balls as she continues in a planed motion --- sliding down on her derriere purposely, grabbing for ‘Desesperado’, in her ankle-holster.

He bends over, grabbing his family-jewels with both hands --- dropping his gun.

“Stand up slowly, you degenerate bastard. She commanded. Blow you? You probably can’t even get it up, you morbid freak. You’re a fucken loser, she shouted as she jumped back to her feet.

Gino was stunned in ballistic disbelief. He underestimated her and she played him for a fool. She insulted his ignorance. He was lividly infuriated but, Peg was in charge now. His nostrils were flaring out, vibrating constantly between breaths. She had the power, the control. Would his twisted mind submit to surrender? Was jail his only option? Or, did she light his short-fuse?

“You bitch! He snapped as he straightened back up. I’m not going back to jail. “

“Oh well; Peg replied! Make one false move and I’ll blow your ass away with my insurance policy. Meet ‘ Desesperado’, she continued as she waved her 38-Special, pointed at his mid section. He takes care of my lite-work; God handles my heavy work. One wrong maneuver and we’ll send you to meet your maker --- dickless. “

“You ain’t got the nerve to shoot me. “ He retaliated. “Don’t insult my intelligence! She replied boldly. Call my bluff if you have the balls to find out! “

He anticipated wrongly as he lunged at her --- taking three slugs to the groin, flabbergasted dead, Trouble eliminated instantly --- Sudden Death as one less menace to society.

Several neighbors heard the shots and came out running, comforting Peg. They escorted her into her house as somebody covered Gino’s lifeless body with a blanket. The police arrived shortly as Peg was on the phone with Clarence. They were familiar with Gino and his alleged involvement in the Social Security case, which was pending. They sent the ambulance away and called the county morgue.

Peg explained to the detectives that Gino abducted her at the bank in the parking lot. She said that she loosened the strap on her ankle holster from under her pant leg as she drove home while he went through her purse. “Preparation was subtle; she confessed! “Desesperado”; was my Element of Surprise, my Savior. ”

The police concluded that it was self-defense by the time Clarence and his Amigos’ arrived. They took Peg back to the Commune to spend the night. She cried on the way there as the guys tried to console her. Clarence held her close as Serge assured her that her nightmare was now over for good as Gino was dead.

When they got home, they all headed for the bar. Even Peg drank Jack Daniels. Henry proclaimed that he was sorry that she had to experience such an ordeal. "But, he admitted, I wish I could of shot that slimy creep myself. "

They all laughed and Max asked, "Do you want to talk about it?" "The whole room was filled as word spread fast and even Lucy returned for support. Peg got it off her chest as she relived the whole incident for her precious friends.

When the residents heard about the amazing 'Trouble Bush', they just had to have one. It was unanimous but they decided to get a dozen of them as so to make sure that trouble no longer lingered over their heads. They would be their Symbols of Peace with Themselves. Tomorrow morning, twelve 'Trouble Bushes' would be planted throughout the grounds.

Peg was relieved. She was quite content, as she felt safe again. She didn't feel guilty about killing Gino but she did feel sorry for him. His life was a living horror. His mother carried a heavy load, an ugly burden. Blame was irrelevant but he lacked faith in God, himself or mankind for that matter as he avoided Love since he was afraid of being hurt again. Thus, his values were shallow, superficial and shameless.

How many Gino's, she wondered are there in this world -- because mankind as a society, corrupted them as it robbed them of their childhood as well as their dreams as they live in shadows of shame. May God have Mercy on them! May God have Mercy on us! She prayed to herself with tears in her eyes.

Clarence sensed her emotions and suggested that she go up to his room and take a nap. "Yah; Serge agreed! Then you can shit, shower and shave your pits and legs so that you're fresh and alert for tonight's action in the Laugh Room. "

Peg giggled as she wiped the tears from her eyes and exited upstairs.

Max hollered out to her: "it would be a pleasant surprise if all the gals dressed up tonight like Sexy Sue does! "

Chapter Five ---- Acceptance

Friday night's performance in the Laugh Room was a splendid success. It was both profitable and quite entertaining. The residents assumed aliases last week and some callers requested them personally. Especially Sexy Sue whom didn't change her name. Even the Queer called back for his Tossed Salad and Bottle of Jack Daniels. Lucy promised him that if he was a good boy, she'd buy him a Gerbil for Christmas. "Oh Baby! " He cried as he got off --- Again.

After the last call, Thomas proclaimed: "I'm Hungry! " And so, off to Denny's they went pronto. When the bus rolled back home about 6AM, everybody crashed for a few hours.

Peg woke up about 9:30AM and left with the gardener in the pick-up truck. They returned with a variety of 'Trouble Bushes'. After lunch, she got a crew of volunteers to plant them, two in front, three on each side and four in the garden. It only took about an hour and then suddenly, the ceremony began as all twelve bushes were utilized.

One by one they stood in line, taking time, taking turns to rid themselves of their troubles; all but Marge. The poor woman looked frustrated as she lingered in her shadows of shame ---- watching all of the shaking and shouting?

"Be gone! " "Off you go!" "Go away! " It was a personal purifying, a Purging of Thy Soul, a Pack between Humans and Nature. It was a Sight to be Seen.

The Amigos' took their turn one at a time after Peg and Lucy. They enjoyed it as did the rest of Social Security. An Aura of Peace was in the Air as everyone vowed --- 'never to bring trouble inside ever again'; everybody, but Marge?

Clarence watched as she fidgeted in pain. He knew that she wanted to participate but she just wasn't ready yet. "She needs a little time", Peg surmised as she put her arm around him. Clarence nodded and predicted: "she'll come around. I hope! Her mind is haywire --- in some disabling fixation. She's cognizant of her surroundings, us, Social Security, the Whole Family but, she's either unwilling or unable to forgive or accept and go on --- yet? Unfortunately, all we can do is wait and see if she accepts closure."

"I'll pray for her." Peg promised.

"I think most of the Commune does. He replied, including me. But, he continued, it's been so long. It is over a year and a half and that's a long time to suffer. "

"God works in mysterious ways. Peg assured. Adversity is but an adventure. Blessed is he whom overcomes without hate or regrets. But, how can one forgive evil? Poor Marge! I can't imagine. Poor Gino;" she continued until she started to cry?

Clarence hugged her as she melted in his arms. "I love you; she replied Gratefully! It's nice having a shoulder to cry on; somebody who cares. " "I love you too! " He dittoed as they headed back inside.

Clarence was shaving when Peg informed him that she needed some things from her house, including her car. He agreed to drive her but only after she compromised her weight for some buttered stone crabs.

They drove to the Crabby-Shack on the Lake. It was such a beautiful afternoon. After they ate, they decided to take a quick swim since they each had shorts on. But first, they locked their valuables ---- his wallet and her purse in the trunk of his car.

Once in the Water, they felt Free as Water has a way of conforming regardless of age and Love, makes you feel as if nothing else matters. They swam like two little fish, stopping every now and again to kiss. In fact, they got hot and bothered and decided to hurry off to Peg's, where they could pacify each other in private.

The beach was too packed to chance it but they made a promise to each other. They vowed to come back some night under a Full-Moon to skinny-dip and make Love in the Water. They sealed their deal with a passionate kiss.

As they departed the water, Clarence had a hard time with a hard-on rubbing between his leg. Peg teased him all the way to the car as he had to walk nonchalantly slow as if he had a stick stuck up his ass.

When they pulled up in her driveway, Peg became hysterical as she seen her 'Trouble Bush'; as Gino's bloody body flashed in her mind. Clarence wanted to drive off but she insisted on going in and quickly grabbing enough cloths and personal items for a week.

"It's going to take time. " He consoled her. It's like you stated earlier this afternoon, referring to Marge's healing as God does work in strange ways but, it is man whom does the dirty deeds. "

"Unfortunately, he continued. " Gino's ego possessed his soul. Ironically, life is but a war with self? Its ego verses soul as Inner-Peace is a prerequisite for World-Peace. For as Father Pierre Teilhard De Chardin professed: 'we are not human beings having a spiritual experience. ' ' We are spiritual beings having a human experience. ' "

"It sounds as if man is his own worst enemy. " Peg surmised. "'To do; or not to do'; in route to perfection or devastation as Humans are so unpredictable. Ironically, fact is stranger than fiction. "

"'Thou Shalt'; is but a Dragon as he drove Nietzsche insane. Clarence exclaimed. Each must learn to tame his own 'Thou Shalt '. You can stay with us for as long as you wish; move in my room with me. United, we can help each other Hope and Cope. Together we can Tame 'Thou Shalt' "

"Perhaps, I think I should sell this place. " She concluded. "How will I ever forget as my poor 'Trouble Bush' has turned into a Trouble Reminder? "

"Then so be it; Clarence agreed! Call the realtor Monday. Social Security is our Family-Home. I Love it there! "

"So do I! " Peg admitted as Clarence escorted her inside past the bush. She packed two suit-cases, including make-up and a surprise. Clarence carried them out. Peg got in her car and he followed her back to the Commune in his.

When they arrived home, they informed the other Amigos' and Lucy that Peg was moving in for good. They were all overjoyed. Suddenly, Lucy interrupted the excitement with more excitement. "Henry asked me to marry him!" "She screamed ecstatically.

Serge got the Jack and Asti.

"Why don't the four of you have a double wedding; Max joked as usual! It'll be cheaper and you can have an orgy in the O-Zone. "

"Ha; Ha! "They retaliated but then, ironically agreed with half of the idea as September 30 was fine with Lucy and Henry and Hawaii sounded fabulous.

They all toasted in honor of the engagement and Peg's new home as Sexy Sue entered the bar. Serge poured her a JD as Max asked her if she wanted to knock off a quickie.

"Absolutely! She replied without any doubt however she explained: I'll meet you in your room in ten minutes; after I confer in private with Peg and Lucy. You best be ready for action as I go crazy for a man who knows what he wants. So, you better decide whether you want to be the 'spanker'; or the 'spankee'. I'll bring the whips and chains for a little pain and a whole lot of pleasure. "

"Oh Baby! "Max exclaimed in anticipation as the three women left the bar area. The other three Amigos' laughed as they shook their heads in disbelief.

"You two are nuts. "Henry analyzed for free.

"You better be careful as that wild sex can kill one of you. "Clarence warned.

"Ah, to each his own", Serge mumbled as he excused himself for a personal rendezvous.

"Another hot date; "Henry queried Serge as he left in silence?

"She must be a dog. Max surmised. He's either afraid or ashamed to bring her around. "

"He's just old fashion! Clarence defended his pal. Sex is a private matter. Mind your own damn business. "

"I'm sorry! "Max apologized as he exited for his beating.

"Is Lucy going to move in? "Clarence asked.

"I don't know. Henry replied. We didn't discuss it but let's go up and take advantage of the girls since we have the chance. "

"I'll race you upstairs! " Clarence joked as they flew up to get lucky.

The three women crept out of the men's rooms, as they were all fast asleep according to plan. At least Peg didn't kill Clarence as she just knocked him out cold.

"Why does sex act as a sleeping pill for men? " Lucy asked as they walked down the hall towards Sexy Sue's room to get ready.

"God only knows. " Sue replied. But, Max will never forget about me. He won't be sitting straight for a few days. "

"You didn't whip him? Did you? "Peg asked with shocking concern.

"Hell No; she responded. He wanted me to give him a hinny-lick, toss his salad? So I took a bite out of his ass, his right cheek to be specific. "

They all started to laugh until Sue confessed. "And then, I tossed his salad but, it wasn't a brown-eye, it was a pink-eye. " Peg continued to laugh so hard that she bent over --- holding her stomach as she literally pissed her pants as Lucy was on the floor, holding her own privates.

"What's so funny? " Some doctor asked as the gals were dying in delight.

"Sexy Sue just performed an oral-rectal-exam! " Lucy exclaimed -- - shutting down his curiosity as he gawked at the negligees which both Peg and Lucy had in their hands and Sue was wearing. He just shook his head in disbelief as he continued about making his rounds.

Serge got back at 8:15 PM. Just in time to wake the other three Amigos'. After a quick shower, they met in the bar. It was 8:45, fifteen minutes before show time and not a woman in sight. Two dozen men marched upstairs scratching their heads. Thomas and some guy with a walker took the elevator. All the guys were confused? They began to panic.

Were the women already up-stairs? Or were they on strike? The door was locked.

When Clarence opened it, it was dark. He turned on the light and SURPRISE --- All the Women had nigh-tees and make-up on, including Marge.

“Fuck the phone calls; Yelled Max! Lets all have an orgy”.

They all started to laugh but then, suddenly the phones began ringing and ringing and ringing as it was business as usual except, Sexy Sue brought a prop.

Throughout the night, she waved a big dildo around --- obscenely, in various gestures. Almost everybody wanted to borrow it but she was stingy and overly protective of her joy toy. Ironically, some of the women blushed with curiosity as she compelled caller's imaginations, regarding her pacifier.

Clarence saw the look in their eyes --- bulging, a sense of wonder. Eva, Edna and Betty were thirsting for knowledge, as satisfaction was the motive behind curiosity. But they weren't alone as Sue's persuader looked so inviting, so enticing yet intimidating, appealing and compelling as it invoked desire.

After all, every form has its function and it looked true to form as if ready willing and able to find a need and fulfill it. Denial would be betrayal as you live and learn. Sometimes, vulnerability is but an excuse.

He laughed, as he knew that Erotic Delights was destined for success and its first customers were ready, willing and able --- right here at home. Ironically, he thought to himself, masturbation use to be a gingerly subject --- strictly taboo. But know, thanks to Sexy Sue, it seems like the thing to do. After all, Sexy Sue never squandered her time.

Suddenly, Max yells, “I can't take it any longer!” He grabbed Sue by the hand and led her to his room. In fact, every body hooked up with somebody or ended up in the ‘O-Zone’; everybody but Marge and Serge. Marge headed to the Garden and Serge to the bar as Lucy busied-out the phone system a bit earlier than usual.

In the bedroom, Peg was nervous as she decided to spit it out. “Clarence, she exclaimed, I have something to fess up to. Honesty is sacred. Thus, I must come clean. “

Clarence was cool, calm and collective as he let Peg speak her 'Peace'. And then, he said "so what! I can't wait to meet Helen. "He even suggested that she'd invite Mud-Bone-John and his band to the wedding. She giggled as they hugged.

After they made love, Clarence began to laugh. "What's so funny?" She asked.

"I can't believe that you use to hang out with Sexy Sue. "

Peg was embarrassed but knew that Clarence was only joking. Suddenly, she replied, "whose idea do you think it was to ban the bra?"

"It had to be Sexy Sue's. " Clarence surmised.

"But of course; she assured. We became liberated together. "

They both had a final chuckle before they fell fast asleep. Peg awoke, up early. It was 5:40 AM and she felt great considering the noisy stormy night. Her burden was lifted as Clarence was oh so understanding. She decided to take a walk in the Garden in spite of the rain, especially since the thunder and lighting subsided. After all, she loved the feel of the raindrops amidst a warm summer breeze. It was so Peaceful as she got lost in the Serenity and Beauty of the Flowers and the falling showers until, she was disturbed by short and sudden out-cries.

"Go away! Be gone! Leave me alone already! "Marge yelled in a weak voice between her tears and sobs as she shook her hands over and over, again and again.

Peg was stunned as she investigated the situation. For it was an irate effort on Marge's part; very daring.

"Marge? She screamed as the poor woman hurried over to another bush and encored. You poor Dear; you're soak-in-wet. You'll catch a cold. "

Marge was distraught, sobbing in sorrow, agonizing in shame. Her pain was traumatic. She was exhausted and yet, seemed determined but will power was not enough. It was preoccupied by doubt, guilt and hate. Unfortunately, it refused to surrender --- to Peace as Ego was in control --- wryly.

Peg felt sorry for her as the 'Trouble Bush', was useless. She needed affection and support as a part of her was dead. Ironically, Faith, Hope and Discipline died as she was nearly hysterical.

Peg tried to comfort her as they embraced. Marge shook like a leaf and cried like a baby. Peg was at a lost for words as she realized that Marge was out here for over three and a-half-hours. She led her inside and gave her a sedative. It kicked in slow but surely as Peg sat next to her bed, holding her hand while singing her favorite song --- ‘ Moon-River ‘ .

By the time she finished singing it for the second time, Marge was out cold. Peg felt awful. The ‘Trouble Bushes,’ put Marge through hell as it endangered her health. Peg couldn’t believe that that little old lady braved all the Rain, Thunder and Lighting that ruled the night and yet, there was no end in sight for her misery. She knew that she had to go face her own ‘Trouble Bush’, --- alone. Or else, she’d end up in Denial --- lying to herself. Ironically, you can run from your ‘Trouble Bush’, but you can’t hide from your troubles. Eventually, they shall imperil if not confronted.

Peg prayed on the way to her house. She asked God for strength and hoped that she wouldn’t panic. Her heart pounded as she pulled in the driveway. But courage was with her as God answered her prayers. Without doubt or hesitation, she performed her family ritual --- perfectly.

Suddenly, she had an eerie thought. Was death the only answer to Marge’s prayers? Is death the ticket to Peace or is misery lurking --- beyond the grave horizon? Can man take his doom and gloom with him? Is ‘Thou Shalt’; invincible?

Peg scratched her head --- puzzled. Why are life and death so complicated? She wondered. What is their relationship, if any? Karma? She believed that God Is the Source and she Hoped that He was the Destination! She stared at her ‘Trouble Bush’. Innocently, it remained silent as usual as if nothing special was required. She bent over and kissed it and then, miraculously, she had a Reckoning, an Epiphany.

She smiled as she realized that * ‘people have one thing in common: they are different.’ All are special as each is unique but, ** ‘forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves.’ Thus, she forgave Gino as she felt at Peace with the Universe.

* ---- Robert Zend; ** ---- Anonymous

At brunch, in the mess hall, Lucy announced that she was moving in. Everybody was delighted; all but Marge and Serge. Marge was fast asleep and Serge was no where to be found. Peg kept silent about Marge's ordeal but planned on telling Clarence.

"Where's Serge?" Henry asked.

"His bed wasn't slept in. Max informed. I knocked three times but, there was no answer so I peeked with concern. He too, must of gotten horny --- last night."

"When are we going to meet his secret lover; "Lucy asked curiously?

"Maybe she's shy? Peg interrupted. Maybe we should invite her on our next outing, break the ice so to speak with ---hospitality. "

"You can take her next month on your trip --- to the male strip joint! Max joked. That is if Serge will let her go? "

Everybody laughed until Lucy spoke. "I think next Sunday's picnic is more suitable. "

"That sounds like a great idea! " Clarence interjected as they all agreed with him.

After brunch, Henry and Lucy went to Lucy's house to pack some cloths. Monday it would be on the market. They decided to take advantage of the bed but, settled for the couch.

Peg told Clarence about Marge's ugly ordeal. He was upset with grave concern. She brought a temporary smile to his face when she revealed that she made Peace with herself and her 'Trouble Bush'; as she forgave Gino.

"Do you still want to live here?" He asked.

"Absolutely; she confirmed! I'm calling the realtor tomorrow for both houses."

"Lucy's selling too?" Clarence asked.

"She said that it's too much to handle. We have the same sediments exactly. Peg assured. Besides, we found our Family Home. "

"Very well; Clarence exclaimed with joy! It's settled then. Now all we have to do is support and comfort Marge with Love. She'll come around. She has to. For when one member of a family is hurting, we all hurt. "

"I Love you! " Peg whispered in his ear.

"I love you too. Clarence dittoed. Whata you say, do you wanna go get some afternoon delight."

"But of course"! Peg replied with a smile. He took her by the hand and led her out the door.

"Where are we going; "she asked?

"Ice-cream; Clarence clarified! Do you think I have sex on my mind all of the time. There are other pleasures in life. "They both laughed as they drove off --- headed for the lake.

Serge came home at suppertime. He got the third degree from both the guys and the gals but he was so ornery and miserable that they let him slide. Silence prevailed until two doctors interrupted dinner with disturbing urgency. Marge had phenomena. She was on oxygen and intravenous antibiotics.

Peg was sick to her stomach. If Marge died, she thought, it's surely my fault. Oh God Please, she prayed; don't let Marge die. She's not ready yet. I'd never forgive myself. Please God, Please have Mercy, Spare her Life until she Heals Spiritually.

Clarence sensed that Peg was upset. He held her in his arms. He knew that she blamed herself. "God works in strange ways. " He reminded her.

"I have to be with her. " Peg insisted.

Clarence walked her to Marge's room but Peg wanted to be alone with her for awhile. He understood and headed for the bar. The Amigos' were there waiting for him. They were confused until he enlightened them about Marge's experience.

"That poor woman; Lucy uttered. What was she thinking"?"

"Misery is so disgraceful and dreadful. Serge professed sympathetically. It masquerades but evidently, it can't be denied. Them 'Trouble Bushes;' served a purpose as Marge confronted herself in spite of the thunder storm. Now, all she has to do is forgive herself and that degenerate bastard that raped her."

"It's easier said than done. Clarence surmised. Her pain is so deeply ingrained. She is helpless? What can we possibly do to help her help herself? Ultimately, we must All Answer to Our-Selves as Forgiveness is Divine. Ironically, we must Live and Die with Self. "

"Doesn't she have any family? " Henry asked sadly.

“She lost both her husband and daughter in the same year to polio in the early fifties. Lucy informed. She never remarried after that. As far as I know, there is no one else.”

“We’re her family! Max assured. And she knows it. She trusts us but, she seems afraid to ask for help. At times, she seems cold as if she is afraid to open up, express her feelings?

“She’s afraid of getting hurt again and again. Clarence added. Distance is her protection as she fights her feelings. But you can’t fight Unconditional Love. Love is all that matters. God is Love. Love is Truth. Truth is Peace. Unfortunately Marge is afraid of Truth. “

Everybody retired early that night; all but Peg. Clarence checked in on Marge before he went to bed and Peg prescribed that she was spending the night with her. Marge was half awake and smiled when Clarence kissed her on the forehead before he left. Peg remained behind nursing and singing off and on throughout the night --- ‘Moon-River’.

Monday rolled in on schedule. Marge forced some soup down for breakfast. Peg entrusted her to the day nursing staff, as she had to tend to Erotic Delights. But first, she called a friend of hers, a realtor whom agreed to represent both homes.

By lunchtime, Erotic Delights was up and running full force as orders came quickly. Drop-shipping was a breeze. Peg informed all that it was against the law to send dirty movies through the US mail. They opted for UPS.

Eva, Edna and Betty were naturals as they took charge.

Incidentally, Clarence was right as all the women had a field day with catalogs as each ordered several sex toys; all but Marge and Peg.

Nonchalantly, Peg reintroduced herself to Sexy Sue. The day flew by as they reminisced in Woodstock. Sue mentioned that it would be great to see Mud-Bone-John again after Peg spilled her secret. That convinced her to invite him to the wedding but she didn't tell Sue.

At supper time in the mess-hall, Lucy announced that Erotic Delights was a success. "Orders are coming in as we speak; she informed; twenty-fours a day, seven days a week via --- the Internet Highway. The average order is \$60.00. We took in \$6,000.00 today. 60% is pure profit --- \$3,600.00.

Everyone was delighted but, Peg was exhausted as she didn't get any sleep last night. Serge called for a celebration. All accepted except Peg whom excused herself and went to check on Marge. Then she headed to bed for the night.

The party was typical as nobody wanted to be the first to leave. Ironically though, nobody got drunken-shit-faced. It seems that experience led to tolerance or respect. Regardless, they all had a good time; all but Marge and Peg.

Day by day, several weeks came and gone as business went on lucratively in spite of the fact that Marge was bed-ridden. She was strong enough just in time for the strip-joint outing but opted to stay home. Peg and Lucy stayed behind with her. Especially since Serge's lover declined their hospitality --- Again.

Sue and the gals had a ball and the X-rated pictures to prove it. They went to the French-Ballet in Canada, where the men take it all off legally. The following week, the guys headed for Canada and Max had the pictures to prove it.

Summer was winding down fast, but the Commune was grateful as Marge recovered fully. There was a good hot month left when Peg and Clarence honored their promise to each other. The skinny-dipping was so refreshing, so romantic, so quiet and secluded. Irresistibly, they couldn't take their hands or eyes off each other. Perhaps it was the spell of the Full-Moon. It was so exciting, so inviting as it drew them together sexually engaged until; they got caught by the State-Troopers. Obviously, an adventure of that magnitude involves risk as it proved to be embarrassing.

The police chuckled as they escorted the couple off the beach. They were polite enough not to write a report let alone a ticket but, explained that they were just doing their duty. "Sometimes that current picks up at night; they warned; especially under a Full-Moon. "

Peg and Clarence understood as they took their lecture like adults and promised not to do it again. They laughed all the way home. Peg admitted that she was embarrassed about her Point-E-Out-E's while Clarence confessed that he too was embarrassed since he shriveled up as they both were cold when they exited the water amidst the night breeze. They vowed to keep it their little secret.

Chapter Six ---- Fate

It was Labor Day; all were excited about the pig-roast. Sue joked that she wanted the penis and testicles. Everybody laughed, especially the renowned chef. The fiesta was most enjoyable as no appetite was deprived --- chef d' oeuvre. In fact, a dozen or so residents ate so much that they accidentally took a siesta as it was a lazy, relaxing event.

When it got dark, they had a sing-along --- around the camp-fire. A few of the residents played their guitars; one had a banjo and two a harmonica. It was actually quite impressive as talent is in the eye or ear of the beholder.

During the old fashion hoe-down, Sexy Sue took the initiative and snuck off with Jacques, the French Chef. She introduced him to the 'O-Zone', seduced him and took him 'around the world'. When they finished, he asked her if the Commune needed a chef de cuisine. The tribe put it to vote around the flickering flames and he was hired.

Suddenly he began to quibble as he confessed, "I've been around the world --- literally but, tonight the sex was the best I ever experienced. Bar none! "

Everybody busted out in an uproar --- again. Sue was proud, she still had it in her as she nabbed a frisky Frenchman, a horny little-devil, twenty years her younger. For she not only knew how to talk the talk or walk the walk, she danced every dance. Bar none!

The summer ended and fall began as the resident's bellies became spoiled when Jacques moved in. Even breakfast was gourmet/cuisine, especially Sunday Brunch. Nobody complained but Max was a bit jealous as the chef shackled-up in Sue's room. Regardless, time flew by as Saturday September 30th, finally arrived and everybody put on a few pounds.

The brides were splendidly beautiful in their simple yet adequate gowns as the grooms looked distinguished and handsome. Clarence wore his surprise suit, which the Amigos' bought for him as Henry sported a new suit, which was also purchased through friendship. In fact the residents chipped in and paid for everything except the honeymoons. Sue offered her birthday suit as a wedding present and even the minister laughed.

Jim-Jim was the Ring-Bearer for both couples and Lucy's Great Grand Daughter --- Beth was the Flower Girl. Chi and Max were the Best-Men and Helen and Sue, the Bride's Maids. Clarence's three sons --- Robert, David and Michael as well as his two other young grand sons --- Nichols and Nathaniel were also there. Dwane, an old friend of Clarence's sang Ave Maria as Peg and Lucy walked down the isle. He had a voice like an angel.

The ceremony itself was short and sweet; the dinner, extravagantly out of this world. Helen and Clarence embraced as they accepted each other with open arms. Mud-Bone-John gave his Blessings, provided the entertainment and picked up the tab for both Honeymoons.

All in all, it was a memorable event. Especially when Sexy Sue blushed as Mud-Bone-John sang a song, which he wrote just for her --- 'Crabs In My Mustache '. Everybody was on the floor rolling and holding their aching guts; even Sorry Sue. The party ended as the band played another song that John also wrote -- - 'The Last Dance of the Night ', which solicited attention as the floor was packed.

The following morning, the four newlyweds departed on their honeymoon. Lucy was nervous, scared to death. She was never in an airplane before by choice. Unfortunately, her father died in a routine flight, which crashed while he was in the Air Force. She was eleven at the time and vowed to avoid the vehicle, which robbed her of her daddy. Ironically, it was the 'Trouble Bush', that gave her courage to face her fears. She carried that burden long enough.

When the plane landed at Honolulu International Airport, Lucy giggled in delight as she actually enjoyed the ride. She was sorry that she refused previous chances and realized that she literally missed out on opportunity as destiny is a winding road. But, she learned not to cry over spilt milk. What's done is done, she thought, Live and Learn, Love and Enjoy. Thus, she vowed to face her fears and never to be pessimistic again.

"Aloha"! "Aloha"! Was the greeting of salutations --- Hawaiian for Love, from the Natives as they placed lei's of garland --- Hibiscus Blossoms of showy flowers and leaves around all of the vacationer's neck's. They also crowned all the women with a wreath on their heads. Half of the Amigos' and their spouses felt at Peace amidst the floral-scented sea breezes and tropical warmth. It was an Unforgettable Moment.

It was in a little boutique on Oahu, nicknamed the 'Gathering Place', where Peg found simple treasure. Its pleasure was truly Spiritual as it was a Naked Truth. Not many realize it as they take it for granted but, oh do they bitch when 'Shit Happens'.

Lucy recognized its value as they bought one hundred tee-shirts sporting words of wisdom --- 'Grace Happens'; as they wanted to spread the Word.

The two weeks flew by before they knew it, as they stayed active. Sight-seeing during the day --- Waikiki Beach, Diamond Head, Pearl Harbor and Sunset Beach just to name a few. The islands were gorgeous. They snorkeled in Hanaumu Bay on the southeast coast, parasailed in the southern Koolau Range near the Nuuanu Pali Lookout where the view of the windward coast is breathtaking. They even took a Circle Island tour and visited a pineapple plantation.

At night it was dinner and dancing --- luau style as poi was their favorite traditional Hawaiian dish. It was absolutely succulent. Ironically, Jack was neglected as Rum was in style. It tasted great in pineapple juice as it snuck up on you. Maybe it was the alcohol but they thought that they died and went to Heaven. They found seashells by the seashore, sandcastles as they day-dreamed and themselves by the time they left Paradise.

Incidentally, Peg and Clarence managed to sneak away late one night and successfully complete their promise as they made Love and skinny-dipped in Peace. Ironically, the last night turned out to be the funniest as both Clarence and Henry decided to play a prank on each other. Unfortunately, on the first day, Henry got sunburn on his bald head and had to buy a hat. Thus, on the last day, Clarence couldn't resist as he spotted a hat with the nickname --- Hank on it and a long ponytail attached to it.

Henry was a good sport as a sense of humor builds character. He put it on and wore it but by the end of the day, he returned the favor. The front of Henry's new shirt read --- 'With It, Again! ', the back of it read --- 'An Original by Choice!'

Clarence laughed as he thought that Henry was reminiscing in nostalgia, trying to be Hip once more. Suddenly, the old hippie handed Clarence his present, also a tee shirt. The front simply read, --- 'It! ', the back --- 'Repulsively Cool as not all Ignorance is Created Equal!' They were a sight to be seen, especially with their newly pierced-ears. They were the 'Odd Couple ', Groovy and It. They danced together and Clarence won the Limbo Contest. Without doubt, they were the life of the party and Peg and Lucy had the pictures to bare witness.

Both Peg's and Lucy's houses sold while they were away in Hawaii. Fortunately, they each got their asking price. In fact, Lucy's sale included the entire contents. Peg gave her furnishings to Helen. What she didn't want; went to charity. Unfortunately, Thomas Manheart was diagnosed with liver cancer while they were gone. He was already on Chemo and radiation.

Sue gave the new Mrs.'s a belated wedding present --- a set of Ben Wan Balls each. She professed that she never left home without them. Then she confessed that she was in Love with Jacques. "I adore him and worship the ground that he walks on, as he knows where my G-Spot is hidden " Peg and Lucy busted out roaring until Betty butted in, as she was ease dropping with Eva and Edna whom also looked puzzled.

“What is a G-Spot?” Betty asked earnestly.

Sue got the honors as she educated the less fortunate. The two newly weds politely excused themselves nonchalantly embarrassed. As they were exiting the room, the other four were giggling like a bunch of teens. Peg just shook her head silently as she couldn't believe how naive or sexually deprived they lived. It was hard to believe that they were all married once and two of them actually gave birth? Perhaps they were Born Again Virgins?

Sue was their inspiration as she created a new outlook on life. They were turning into sex-pots, all dolled-up. She was their role model as all three of them wore mini-skirts, wigs and make-up galore. Her word was God when it came to sex as they worshiped her experience. They couldn't wait to explore her advice as she suggested that they buy a curved G-Spot vibrator from Erotic Delights.

The Amigo's were shooting pool at one of the two pool tables when the call came in. Clarence was elated. He finally had his Girl. Brandie just gave birth to Baby Mayan Angela. Serge sounded the call for Celebration and the entire commune partied. Even Chi stopped by for a few.

The first year passed in spite of the ups and downs as Social Security proved to be a caring congregation, a Mecca of Love. For they came a long way, shared both the good and the bad --- Together as a Family. But what surprised them all was the fact that they sustained for themselves as the businesses were booming.

Peg's Great Sense of Humor was an asset in balancing her multi-faceted-responsibilities. She overcame each and every challenge of her endless tasks, on a daily basis. She was the Backbone of the Commune and she knew how to throw a big party.

At the Anniversary Celebration, Peg and Lucy presented the Four Amigos' with a token of appreciation from the Tribe for playing a major active roll in daily operations. The Comrades were proud as they sported their new ponchos. Each had his name stitched on his. To top it off, they were also given their own sombreros. They looked Bad --- Armed Ambries!

Old Carlos was in his glory when somebody popped in a CD of Spanish Music. He was ready to go in his wheel chair, shaking his maracas, sporting his own poncho and sombrero. He was the oldest resident at ninety-three yet, as healthy as a horse except, for a broken foot.

The women took turns wheeling him around as he drank tequila. A few even sat in his lap. Sue flashed him her tits as she made his day and he felt like the Fifth Amigo.

It was a day they would never forget as Carlos was quick with the draw as he showed Sue his gun. Sue was in love again, for a minute, as he had a whopper --- hung like a horse. Sue nicknamed him; 'Numero Uno Macho'. He was proud as she screamed "Ooo-Lah-Lah"!

It was a Sunday, after the traditional brunch when the Amigos' decided to go to the park and feed the pigeons. Suddenly, they spotted him --- King-Wine-O, laying in the grass, brown bag in his hand, talking to himself, having a good-ol-time.

"Poor bastard; Max pointed? I wonder how long it's been since he had three hots, a bath and a cot?"

"Let's go over and ask him!" Clarence suggested as they approached him with unduly caution. Startled, Joe sat up. "Want a drop!" He offered generously.

"No thanks. " They echoed simultaneously.

"Are you hungry?" Henry asked sympathetically.

"I'm OK!" Joe answered as he extended his hand and introduced himself politely. He told the guys that he had no family and that he was a Free-Spirit, blowing in the Wind from town to town --- pursuing Destiny. He considered himself a legend in his own mind, a self-taught blues singer.

"Have a listen!" He offered without hesitation as he whipped out his harmonica and sang -- 'Brown Bagged Wine'.

Brown Bagged Wine
(King Wine-O)

Sitting on a park bench
Laying a little low
Watching all the people, hustle as they go
Off to work, it's a steady job
A routine rut and guess whose stuck
It ain't me --- I'm free
I'm the King and I do my thing
Brown bagged wine, --- feeling fine
The more I drink, it lets me think
I have plenty of time
All the time
For me and mine --- brown bagged wine

Laying in the tall grass
Watching it grow
Figure out why --- hell nooo
Mother Nature, It's a steady job
A routine rut and guess whose stuck
It ain't me --- I'm free
I'm the King and I do my thing
Brown bagged wine, --- feeling fine
The more I drink, it lets me think
I have plenty of time
All the time
For me and mine --- brown bagged wine

Laying on my death bed
Feeling a little low
Afraid of dying --- hell nooo
Human Nature, it's a steady job
A routine rut and guess whose stuck
It ain't me --- I'm free
I'm the King and I do my thing
Brown bagged wine, --- feeling fine
The more I drink, it lets me think

I have plenty of time
 All the time
 For me and mine --- brown bagged wine.
 Day and night, it feels right
 Me and mine, brown bagged wine
 Have-in a good ol time, All the time.

The Amigos' were moved by Old Joe's sincerity. They were impressed with his Simple Philosophy of Life. They clapped when he finished his song. Henry took a twenty dollar bill from out of his pocket and Joe was so happy that he did a jig.

Suddenly, Serge had an idea as his Heart was Inspired. He called his friends over to the side for a huddle. They conversed in conference and all agreed. Joe was ecstatic, as he became a member of the Commune.

King Wine-O was welcomed with open arms --- Naturally. Ironically, he was so pleased to have a home and a family that he actually quit drinking. He became a tea-totter and assumed position as head gardener, an acquired perfection which he learned in his travels.

Old Joe and Thomas Manheart became friends. Joe felt sorry for him as he was having a hard time dealing with his treatments. Sometimes his pain was unbearable. He consulted with the Amigos' about growing some marijuana to ease Thomas's pain.

"Why certainly; was their reply; anything to help Thomas but, no selling it!"

One fine day, while spraying his Special Plants, he spotted a familiar face --- a new resident. "Anna He whispered? He couldn't believe his eyes? Talk about Fate, Destiny, Coincidence! It was a Miracle, a second chance encounter, a Dream Come True! Ironically, it was a bit spooky like Deja Vu or Synchronicity as he got the chills --- down his spine.

Actually, he thought that she was dead. But as it turned out, she was a victim of robbery --- knocked on the head and left for dead. Nobody knew who she was for years as she suffered in amnesia. Eventually, her memory came back --- a decade later. She searched for Joe but, he vanished by choice as he went searching for her until he gave up --- Hope and turned to the bottle. It was his only friend or family for the last thirty-five/ forty years until a few months ago.

It was a tender moment! A time for hugs and kisses, tears and laughter as brother and little sister reunited. Anna professed her Faith that she knew that they would find each other before death. She dedicated her life ---searching for Joe. She utilized the internet, talk-shows, public records, etc. She even prayed everyday. In fact, she was praying when he spotted her.

She was grateful to God for answering her prayer and to the Commune for being so generous in accepting her as she had very little income. Joe shared her sediments --- exactly as he confessed that he Loved it there. He apologized for being so weak and giving up Hope.

“Blame is irrelevant in Life.” She replied as they embraced --- looking into each others eyes, tears of joy spilling down both faces. “We mustn’t feel sorry for ourselves. She continued. It’s a useless waste of time. It’s like hurry and worry, fret and regret which are misconceptions of time and lead to depression and anxiety. Let’s make the best of the time we have left for each other, with each other when we can be so lucky. From Now On, Lets Enjoy Life Fully --- Always.”

Joe agreed as they kissed and then, just sat there holding hands --- reminiscing. Suddenly, they were interrupted by Marge who was confronting her troubles thanks to a renewed Spark of Hope and a Lot of Courage as Max was curiously eye-balling Anna from behind another Trouble Bush. Joe spotted him and laughed to himself as Anna inquired about Marge. He enlightened her but not before he gave Max the evil eye.

When Marge left, Joe exclaimed; “rumor has it that they castrated the sinister bastard that raped her while he was in jail. But first they raped him and eventually killed him. I hope he was alive when they cut off his balls! “

“What goes around; comes around; Anna replied. It’s called Karma and, it ain’t prejudice as Karmatic Retribution is a Fact of Life. If not in this life-time; then perhaps the next but; --- Eventually. In the meantime we all have to live with our conscience. For as Edgar Cayce warned --- ‘the laws of the universe continue to operate even when ignored. ‘Every act, Good or Bad, is recorded in a ‘Journal of Life’, The ‘Akashic Records’, the Annals of Humanity. “

“You believe in reincarnation? “ Joe asked his little sister with a startled look on his face. “I most certainly do! She insisted without any doubt. It’s the only thing that makes any sense to me. Why; don’t you? “

“To be perfectly honest with you, I never really thought about it Sis. “ He admitted ardently with an opened mind.

“Believe it or not, many great minds believed in it, including Einstein, Ben Franklin, Plato and Edgar Cayce himself -- -- the renowned ‘Sleeping Prophet’. If you’re interested, she continued, I have many intriguing books on the subject. In fact Einstein proved in his theory that matter never dies as it just takes on a new form --- Conversion. “

“It sounds fascinating! “ Joe replied with excitement. “I’d love to be enlightened. Please pick one out for a novice layman. “

That night she obliged her brother with a book about Edgar Cayce’s life --- ‘There is a River’. He was overwhelmed as he spent half the night reading it. The next morning, he admitted that he was hooked on Cayce, as he wanted to read more about his life endeavors. As luck would have it, she had a whole library of books concerning his remarkable predictions as she was an adamant follower.

Anna became Joe’s companion in the garden as they shared the responsibilities. He laid out the genesis and the history of the Social Security for her. He even warned her to stay away from Max. But little sisters never listen to older brothers as they have to find out for themselves.

Max put the move on Anna and she accepted as they began dating. Eventually, they were inseparable. Old Joe McCoy was a bit jealous as if he lost his best friend since she was spending so much time with him. He respected her judgment however, he was a bit overprotective of his sibling. Especially; since he heard that Max was married and divorced three times because he couldn't keep his pecker in his pants. Thus, he warned Max with no disrespect intended, that he better treat her like a lady or else, he'd stick ' El Caramba ' up his arse. Joe made it perfectly clear that he wasn't about to put up with his malarkey or shenanigans.

His point was well taken as Max didn't push his luck by disobeying Joe's wishes. He Respected both Joe and Anna and would never jeopardize their friendship not to mention; he didn't want to get in a heap of trouble. Hence, he never even joked about sex in front of Anna let alone make a naughty move. Frankly, Old Joe was from the old school, old fashion, when it came to romance. He lost his sister once but now he was here to protect her, reputation and all. He insisted on courting and marriage before hanky panky.

Ironically, it was Anna whom seduced Max. She insisted that he take her to a motel like some teenagers, sneaking off. Although Max was scared of Old Joe, his hormones couldn't resist provoking temptation. Especially since she assured him that she'd handle her brother.

Joe was pissed at first but after all, she insisted, "this is a New Millennium, the Age of Aquarius and besides, I'm a big girl now. I'm just trying to enjoy the rest of my life like we agreed. "

Joe apologized to both Max and Anna and gave them his Blessings. They accepted and announced that they were engaged and the Commune had a double celebration. Coincidentally, Sue and Jacques also decided to tie the knot as settling down seemed to be the thing to do.

Serge was a bit uneasy. Perhaps he was somewhat jealous; perhaps he was sick and tired of the advances from the 'Three Sex-Pots', whom were hot to trot. For he and Joe were declared fair game as Betty, Eva and Edna were on a mission --- Gotta Get a Man!

Actually, it was at the Christmas in July Party, when they proved to be extreme. They were dressed-up like Santa's Little Helper's --- short mini-skirts and crotch-less, panty-hoes. Joe was playing Santa Claus and the Three Sex Pots kept jumping in his lap, asking for Naughty Christmas Presents. He was somewhat offended but tolerated their lucid behavior since they spiked his cup of teas. Eventually, he ended up in Eva's bed and woke up with a hang over.

Betty and Edna were jealous, so they set their sights on Serge. Betty told him that if he found her G-Spot, she'd toss his salad. He declined the offer, only to be propositioned by Edna whom offered to take him around the world. He politely refused and left the building.

Frustrated but determined, they didn't abandon their mission as they approached Carlos. After all, he was 'Numero Uno Macho'. He had plenty to go for. Surely, he could satisfy both of them whom admired experience. The ninety-three year old gladly accepted their invitation to the 'O-Zone'; for a Three-Some.

Three weeks before their scheduled trip, Serge got a call from Aspen. Paradise Lost had a big fire and their trip was postponed. All were disappointed until Chi showed up with Good News. Both Prudent Paradise as well as the State settled the class-action lawsuits --- out of court. After investigating, they uncovered several other rapes over the years and a lot of abuse; as wrap-sheets were ignored. Alas, Social Security was loaded as each resident would receive one million dollars from each claim for their trauma, fear and neglect. All that was pending; was the three individual suits pertaining to --- Marge, Thomas and Max.

The Commune was excited, as the amount was a most welcomed surprise. Perhaps it was the title --- 'Millionaire', which impressed their Ego. Perhaps it was a matter of Principle --- Compensation, which they deserved. But eventually, the commotion wore off as they were already Happy; all but Marge, it would take more than money to salvage her Peace.

In the mean time, Serge Yelled --- “The bar is open; Drinks are on Me. “Thomas was the life of the party as he passed out his joints. Even Marge smoked the marijuana as the whole Commune got stoned and pigged out on pizza and wings. Marge even laughed as she cackled like a silly old hen. Everything seemed so funny to her. Ironically, she forgot about her troubles for at least a little while.

Chapter Seven ---- Confrontations

Summer turned Fall and Sue and Jacques, Anna and Max were married in a double ceremony on the grounds and spent their honeymoons in Hawaii. They too, were impressed with the Islands as they also found themselves --- Spiritually and expressed their Love physically.

On the last day, Sue made a promise to Jacques “you can have breakfast in bed every morning, all you can eat --- Me! But, she added, it’s self-service. She even got a tattoo on her inner thigh inscribed with --- ‘Eat Me, Anytime!’ She showed it off proudly when they returned home.

Winter was just around the corner when some of the cats had kittens and dogs --- puppies, again. The new life brought excitement throughout the Commune until they realized that they had a surprise problem. The fleas were dealt with swiftly but, that wasn’t what he was concerned about.

“Whose going to feed and tend to all these animals when we’re in Mexico?” Serge asked as they were eating lunch in the mess hall.

“Mexico“; echoed through-out the room with; confused looks on all their faces?

“I just got a call from a friend, Serge enlightened, mud-baths and hot-springs! We gotta take a vote. There is an opening in three weeks but they need a deposit. “

“Yes“; echoed unanimously without any doubt! Carlos was so excited that he through his sombrero in the air, stood up and did a Mexican Hat Dance then, flashed his manhood. Everybody started to laugh until Clarence suggested.

“We best hire some professional animal sitters. “

“Let’s get rid of the whole bunch. “ Max interrupted sarcastically.

“Bite your tongue! Anna argued their case defensively. They’re part of the family.”

“Relax darling. Max replied. I’m only kidding. “

“I’ll make some calls in the morning” “Peg promised as she and Clarence left to go shopping and Serge excused himself to make his phone call to confirm their reservations.

Clarence and Peg bought ponchos and sombreros for all to be worn on their Mexico trip. Later that night, Lucy was in her room, secretly stitching names on each poncho when Peg came in with the news. Unfortunately, Marge was susceptible again to --- phenomena and, still sensitive to her intimidating memories. They were profound and conflicting and she was confused and expiring. She looked pathetic --- dying in misery, guilt and shame. Clarence was pissed as he resorted to drastic measures.

“Shit Happens! He shouted at Marge as an act of Love. So get over it. Quit feeling sorry for your self. Forgive! Forgive God and yourself and the monster that tormented you --- Now; ASAP”.

Marge was completely startled as she cried with mix signals in an emotional tailspin. She knew that Clarence was kind, considerate and humble. Why then, she wondered; is he yelling at me?

Suddenly, she realized that he was right. It was time to face herself; troubles and all; before she met her Maker. It was a defining moment; yet ironically --- irresistible. Peace at Last? Hopefully!

“Have Faith”! She whispered to herself as she focused in on Death’s Door --- lingering semiconscious between Two Worlds.

One minute, Clarence looked like a shadow of a figure, the next; she’d seen shadows and heard voices --- Beyond. Ironically, she was scared of Death but, she felt at Peace as she hovered in and out of her own body; laying in the bed. Suddenly, her favorite poem --- “Footprints”, flashed in her brain like some God-sent.

Footprints
(Author Unknown)

One night a man had a dream,
He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Across the sky flashed scenes from his life.
For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand.
One belonged to him, the other to the Lord.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him,
 He looked back at the footprints in the sand.
 He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was
 only one set of footprints.
 He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest
 times in his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it.
 “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you,
 You’d walk with me all the way.
 But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my
 life,
 There is only one set of footprints.
 I don’t understand why when I needed you most you would leave
 me? “

The Lord replied, “My precious, precious child.
 I love you and would never leave you.
 During your times of trial and suffering,
 When you see only one set of footprints,
 It was then that I carried you. “

Marge felt somewhat relieved as Clarence sensed that death was imminent. She tried to smile as Clarence pulled a chair by her bed. Her face was consumed with worry and fear and an oxygen mask.

“You look so sad my Dear Friend; so terrified. Are you afraid to die? “She nodded; --- Yes. “You haven’t spoken for over two years, except to the Trouble Bushes. Don’t blame yourself. It wasn’t your fault. But, you must forgive the Bastard.”

Marge smiled as if to acknowledge that his rational was correct. “Death should be a Peaceful Transition! Clarence continued. Don’t take your mental anguish with you. Leave it here. Think Flowers! We both know the Joy that they give you.

“Suddenly, he pulls a bunch of Roses from behind his back --- which he robbed from a vase in the hallway on his way up. Tears were rolling down her face as he hands them to her and kisses her forehead. He then proceeded to make up a story about Flowers --- ‘Samantha’s Paradise’, as her face lit up instantly like a child at Christmas time.

Samantha's Paradise

Once upon a time, not so long ago --- right here on Earth; little Samantha had come a long way in her journey through her young life. Ultimately, she proceeded to love flowers. Everyday throughout spring and summer, she would visit Gram-Ma's garden.

Anticipation was routine as Samantha knew that Gram-Ma would let her pick 1 or 2. Sometimes, 3, 4, 5, and once, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 --- a whole dozen! They were so beautiful and her mother was always surprised --- time and time again.

Gram-Ma was such a kind old soul with a green-thumb. She could always grow more --- said she; "go ahead --- indulge, pick 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or 6. Savior their Smell, their Beauty; Enjoy!" And believe it or not, Samantha surely did --- always. For the flowers made her day and night. She even dreamed about Gram-Ma's precious passion.

Perhaps that's why Gram-Ma called her garden --- 'Samantha's Paradise'. After all, Samantha would literally get lost in this 'Field of Dreams'; this Paradise of Beauty, Awe and Wonder."

Marge rolled over on her side and wiped the tears from her eyes. Clarence knew that she was compelled by his little tale. He smiled at her and continued.

"I guess it would be safe to say that Samantha actually inherited Gram-Ma's fancy for flowers as she became one with them and, they were her Friends. She put them in vases, wore one as a corsage and even kept one in her hat and socks.

Sometimes her cat Tig Tig, would come and hang out with her in the garden. Animals know a good thing when they see it as they appreciate Mother Nature. But, Samantha knew Tig Tig's little secret? He just liked to hide way-way-way in the back and take a nap in the shade. There were so many Flowers in Gram-Ma's Garden that --- Tig Tig blended right in Samantha's Paradise as you could not find him unless you knew where he actually was. And that's the way Tig Tig liked it --- At One with the Beauty, Awe and Wonder of Being.

Samantha Loved Tig Tig as much as she Loved Gram-Ma and her Flowers. She would never give up Tig Tig's hiding-spot. For nobody but her and Gram-Ma knew about it. No body except the Flowers, the Birds, Bees, several Squirrels, 3 Trees, the Sun, Moon, and the Stars. Yes, sometimes Tig Tig would sleep there on hot Summer-nites.

Wouldn't you iffin you knew where it was? After all, isn't every body searching for a Little Paradise --- Here on Earth?"

Marge laughed and shook her head yes. Clarence knew that he was making headway --- progress in route to Peace. He paused for a brief moment and put his hands on top of her hands. She reached for his and he continued as they locked fingers.

"Samantha was a very lucky little girl and she knew it. She was happy and grateful that she was blessed to have Gram-Ma, Tig Tig and her Paradise of Flowers. She couldn't imagine her life without them. But ironically as life is so irony, so unpredictable; Samantha got the surprise or shall we say shock of her life --- Reality as all the Flowers were going bye-bye? Poor Tig Tig started to hide-n-sleep in a tree--- with the Squirrels?

Slowly but surely, Samantha knew deep down in the Heart of her Heart that something wasn't quite right. Little by little, first 1 or 2; then 3, 4, 5, 6 began to wilt and wither --- away? Samantha was so upset; she did not know what to do?

Unfortunately, she kept her trouble to herself? She never expressed her concerns to anybody. Not even Gram-Ma or Tig Tig, whom continued to hide in trees --- daily? Maybe he was troubled too since he became a Watch-Cat? He wouldn't sleep anymore. Instead, he spied suspiciously.

Alarmed by Tig Tig's verifying indication, Samantha did the only thing she could think of. She sorta tried to Pretend and Wish and Hope it --- Trouble, Away. She even Prayed to God for help. Ironically, sometimes His answer is No?"

Marge let go of Clarence's hands to wipe the tears from her face. Evidently, his point touched home. He kissed her on the cheek and proceeded on.

"But finally, one sad day, Gram-Ma found Samantha in her Garden of Paradise --- sad as sad can be? " What's a matter Sweetie?" Asked Gram-Ma.

"They're gone?" Replied Samantha sadly. "Every last 1, 2, 3?" Gram-Ma just laughed as she took the wilted bunch of Flowers from her hand.

"Relax", Gram-Ma continued with mercy. "Take a Deep Breath or two or three! Let me Enlighten you Girl. After all, life is an Education. Nature is our Greatest Teacher. As I see it, Death is a Perfect Example. Every Living-Thing must die. Death is a Test of Character, in the Fullness of Time."

"Oh No;" yelled Samantha. No, no, no, not you Gram-Ma!"

"Hush-hush Sweet Samantha, even me. It's a Fact of Life, it's a Natural Situation. Don't make such a fuss or an ordeal over it. You must continue on your Spiritual Journey as each and every one of us is here to Learn."

"Inevitably, there is a Time to Live and a Time to Die. In-Between, we get to Enjoy the Flowers, Birds, Tig Tig and each other --- Quality-Time. Rejoice in the Beauty, Awe and Wonder of Being! Live and Learn Angelically! Live and Love Unconditionally. Love is an Eternal Secret! For when Love is your Passion", Gram-Ma consoled; "Peace is your Pleasure!"

Samantha started to cry as she jumped into Gram-Ma's arms. "I Love you Gram!"
 "And, I Love you too!" Replied Gram-Ma. "God Loves you Unconditionally and God Loves the Flowers too. They're not gone, they just went Home to a bigger and better Paradise to be with God in Heaven! Next year, there will be new Flowers to Enjoy. A Gift from God to us. For God answers all Prayers --- Eventually; one way or another as our Father Knows Best. Until then, we get to Indulge in the Memories!

THE END!"

When they made eye contact, she had a big smile on her face. She pulled the mask away from her face and whispered "Thank You' "; as Clarence hugged her. Then with tears of joy in her eyes, she continued to speak. "I forgive. I can let go now in Peace as 'Grace Happens '! I'm moving on to Paradise to be at one with God and the Flowers, Sam and Samantha. I Love You and all of ---" were her last words as she died with her Eyes Wide Open as well as her Heart, Mind and Soul.

Clarence bent over and kissed her on her silent lips. He closed her eye-lids, and said a small prayer as he felt relieved that Marge made Peace with her Self. He put the Flowers in her hands, draped in her lap before he exited to announce her passing to all the others.

"She looked fine in the garden this afternoon. "Anna broke the silence as all were shocked. "The Doctor said that she had Walking-Phenomena. Clarence clarified. God only knows how long she was suffering. The poor woman never complained about anything. She was so; congested as her lungs were full of water. It must have been so painful, just to breath. "

"God Bless her Soul! Henry shouted. Her last two years were a reoccurring nightmare."

"She's at Peace now! Clarence assured. She spoke before she passed on. She forgave and left her troubles behind and sent her Love and Thanks to All. He fibbed a little.

"Amen! " Yelled Max

"I'll put the flag at half-mass and meet you all at the bar. Serge insisted. This calls for a celebration as Marge would surely approve. "Everyone charged to the bar in the memory of Marge. Unfortunately, the party was a bummer as they tried to pacify grief but, it can't be fooled. You got to let it take its course.

One by one, they retired unannounced until, Serge found himself; alone. He went out on the porch and looked up at the stars in the sky and wondered why? Why we live, why we die? Suddenly, he remembered a poem which his mother sent him when he was in Korea or was it Nam?

It was before the accident. She wrote it for him, a little outlook on the way life works --- sometimes? He came to Cherish it as a goal, his Life Dream to be fulfilled as he played his part in Destiny. It gave him inspiration to fight for what is right, for his Country as he kept re-enlisting in spite of the fact that war is hell. Thus, 'Life' got him through some hard times.

Life

You live, you die
 But who, who knows why?
 First, you're born into this life
 Before long, you've a husband or a wife
 Both face the good and bad
 Both have times happy and sad
 Together you make love tender and warm
 Before long, a child is born
 He lives, he'll die
 But who, who knows why?
 You brought him into this life
 And soon, he too will have a wife
 You're getting older
 Tired of looking over your shoulder
 You've made many, many mistakes
 But by now, you know what it takes
 Now, now you know why
 Why people live, why people die!

Life, life is the reason
And it can happen in any season
Soon, soon you'll die
And he, he'll wonder why
But some, someday he'll know
And I hope he has a long way to go
Because life, Life is Beautiful.

Unfortunately, the memory of his dream depressed Serge as it was unfulfilled. He felt as if Life didn't play him a fair hand. He went back to the bar, downed a Jack and went to bed.

The next morning, Clarence notified his Grandson --- Chi about Marge's demise since he handled all her affairs. Chi came over; latter in the afternoon to read her last will and testament. Evidently, unbeknownst to the Commune, she met with Chi three days prior in his office by choice. She gave him Power of Attorney and accepted an offer in her law suit.

She was loaded, including stocks and bonds and no family. Chi elaborated that she lost both her husband and a daughter, Sam and Samantha in the same year --- 1950 to TB, the dreadful consumption. She never remarried and therefore, she left every penny to Social Security in annual installments via a trust fund.

"Like I told Clarence three days ago, Chi continued, her husband and daughter were both cremated. Hence, she too wished to be cremated and her ashes spread throughout the garden including by Old Joe's Special Plants. "

Everybody was extremely touched by Marge's last testimonial. She acknowledged that she Loved the Commune and Thanked everyone for their care and concerns. Anna suggested that they dedicate the Garden in Memory of Marge.

Clarence motioned that they name it Marge's Paradise. All agreed with the two ideas. Serge stated that he too, wanted to be cremated and have his ashes spread out in the Garden as well --- since he had no family. Henry protested that the Commune was his Family. He got no argument.

Max exclaimed ---“what’s good enough for Marge is good enough for me;” and all agreed to a Family Tradition; --- Marge’s Paradise as their final resting place.

“Incidentally, Chi informed, Marge settled for \$67,000,000.00 cash up front.”

“What about mine?” Max asked curiously.

“Yah, and mine; “Thomas dittoed?

“They made an offer this morning for both of you. Do either of you want to discuss it in private?” Chi asked professionally.

“Spit it out!” Max demanded.

“Yah, I can’t take the suspense.” Thomas confessed nervously.

“\$5,000,000.00 cash; for you Max and \$50,000,000.00 cash for you Thomas”.

“Hot Damn; Max yelled. Settle!”

“Hallelujah, where do I sign?” Thomas asked with a joint in his hand.

Needless to say, Thomas paid for the drinks. Chi had one with the Commune in honor of Marge and then he left to make arrangements for her cremation but; not until they decided to lay her out for a day in the living room down the hall. It would take a few days before they got her ashes.

Clarence suggested that everyone wear their ‘Grace Happens!’ tee-shirts since it was amongst Marge’s final words on her death-bed. Everybody promised to oblige, even Chi. The party didn’t feel like a celebration as Marge was on everybody’s mind -- - almost. Perhaps Max and Thomas were somewhat overwhelmed by their settlements as the former got --- drunk and the later -- stoned. Except for the two of them, the atmosphere was gloomy --- under the spell of grief.

Clarence was at the piano, tickling the Ivory, deep in thought. It's funny how the loss of a Loved One makes you think. He thought about God, Man and Nature; Mind, Body and Soul; Mental, Physical and Emotional, Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Is, As and At; Steam, Ice and Water; Spirit, Blood and Water; Wisdom, Intellect and Intuition? Faith, Reason and Mercy by Grace; Super Conscious, Conscious and Sub Conscious; as well as Super Ego, Ego and Id? He never realized that there were so many names for the Trinity.

Perhaps, he concluded, it's no small wonder that there are so many Different Religions or that we have resorted to Separation of Church and State and Science and Religion as we settle for Physical, Mental and Spiritual Anguish.

What is the common goal? He asked himself; Survival? Is all fair in Love and War and Survival? What is Truth? What is man's Duty? Why do men have different Values? Different senses of direction? And, why do some have the Audacity to think that they are the 'Chosen People'? Ironically, he started to laugh as he concluded that both science and religion are but one big misunderstanding.

He started to play Chop-Sticks to calm his thoughts and emotions. He knew that Thought is Energy. * 'That consciousness is intelligence in action and all consciousness has feeling. 'He remembered reading that man is ** 'one of many appearances of the thing called Life and that we are not its perfect image. For it has no image except Life and Life is multitudinous and emergent in the stream of time.' He also read somewhere that Mother Earth Her-self; is a Living Organism ---- GAIA.

Peg joined him in Double-Chop-Sticks. He smiled as he welcomed her company and elaborated on his thinking, regarding the Trinity. He then asked her --- "do humans really believe that we are created in God's image? That God looks Human? Or; that the Human Race is Superior in our estimated --- 13.5 billion-year-old universe? Talk about arrogance and conceit! Go figure? "

*Harold Sherman ---- 'You Live After Death'

**Loren Eiseley ---- 'The Immense Journey '

Suddenly, Clarence had a Divine Permeation.

“Someday he prophesied, Mankind will Believe; they will B4 H.E.A.R.T.! They will believe in God, Self and Each Other. For man Is but, the WORD of GOD. Man is a Living Bible. Man is but, ‘AS’; he is --- Functionality. “

Peg welcomed his Revelation but she was somewhat skeptical. “It sounds like Wishful Thinking. She surmised. Man is so Damn Peculiar. What you see is what we achieved --- Together.”

“Hardly; “Clarence insisted!

“I Have Faith in Mankind. Unfortunately man has been labeled and classified as a Noun. But in actuality, we are more than just a person --- ‘AS’; Action Speaks Louder than Mere words ---- Good and Evil. Man is but; ‘AS’; he is. Someday Mankind will realize that we are One; with God. Each of us is a little god whom must live with and face ---- our self. “

“Little Devils sounds more like it! Peg joked sadly. An un-divine comedy as mankind pathologically worries about individual rights and neglects his personal responsibilities. Selfishness is a poor excuse. “

“‘Opinions and excuses are like ass-holes’, Clarence responded. We always have one as Philosophy is the epitome of man. But, it’s what makes us so unique as it is synonymous as a finger-print. Ironically, there aren’t two that are exactly the same. Hence, Cicero exclaimed; ‘O philosophy, you leader of life’. “

“I often wonder where we are headed! Peg interrupted sarcastically. Apparently, philosophy is in fact so ambiguous but, so are Politics, Science and Religion. After all, there is surely a gap between policy and practice, between sin and crime, between morals and morale as ethics are suspect in the name of economics. Especially since man has a hard time practicing what he preaches. For how many mean what they say and say what they mean? “

“Man is at a crossroads; Clarence replied; Obedience or Moral Choice? Maya or Truth! “

“Maya”; Peg asked?

“Illusion; “Clarence clarified!

“We create our own Reality as we see what we want to see and hear what we want to hear? “

“Wanton arrogance;” Peg exclaimed.

“Perhaps, he replied, the Classical Greeks adopted the appropriate terminology --- ‘ Divine Madness ‘, as mankind has progressed to make such a ‘Todo‘ out of ‘ Nut-ting ‘ or -- Chaos out of Peace. For men worry about composure and reputation and yet, they can’t compose themselves properly as they are torn between ‘Maya‘ or ‘Truth‘, as logic takes precedent over humanity?”

“Hence, ST. Augustine surmised:

‘Two cities have been formed by two loves. The earthly by the love of self; even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by love of God; even to the contempt of self’.

Peg paid attention to detail as Clarence bared his Heart and Soul.

“Ultimately, we are All Blessed with Reason and Free Will. He continued. But unfortunately, most choose to ignore their other Blessing --- Intuition? “

“It’s a battle of Left Brain verses Right Brain, Intellect verses Intuition. Instead of working together in Cooperation, they compete. Man must trust his Conscience which is also more than a Dormant Noun, and learn to recognize thy own Invading Enemy Within as the source of our own problems. Personal conflict is the result of Ego; a parasite, which everybody hosts as Ego manipulates Soul. “

“It seems as if we don’t acknowledge their existence? “ Peg concluded without doubt. “Humans choose to ignore both their Conscience and Intuition? “

“Ironically, Clarence clarified, man is baptized by Logic - -- Divine Bait as Curiosity is the ‘Original Sin ‘. For God planted a seed --- Temptation, when he warned: ‘Don’t eat of the Tree of Good and Evil.’ ‘And the Lord God said: behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.... But lest he put forth his hands and take also of the tree of life. Thus ... the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden. ’ ---Genesis 322-23 “

“The Logical Fall of Man! Peg shouted, ‘AS’, each is so obsessed with finding his own ‘Tao’; or Way through Life. Thus, we are in the midst of a Logical Revolution since Logic is the unclear, ever-present, prominent and predominate function of all Mankind ’ AS ’ --- To each his own involved method to his own possessed madness. “

“Precisely, Clarence professed with a twinkle in his eyes. We are possessed by our own thoughts --- Formulated Ignorance, ‘The Forbidden Fruit’. Thus, we are guilty by reason and reasonable doubts ‘As’; Logic and Free Will unite into Choice --- a license to freedom, ambition, agility, emancipation, independence and individualism. Alas, zealous pride --- the trade-mark of Human-Beings, Shame on Us, our own Fig-Leaf as we are confounded and dumbfounded in spiritual delinquency --- a vainglorious society, a human travesty with a mess of troubles per Ego, the invisible intimidator, ’ The Keeper of Our Own Crypt. ’ “

Peg nodded in silence as he elaborated.

“Chaotically, we cogitate, reflect and theorize immaturely. For each of us is so wrapped up and absorbed in our own little secular worlds --- based on tenacious beliefs, judgments and habits as we con-form into a niche --- looking for approval while we compromise with our own Dignity, at the expense of Humanity. Confronted with enchanting risks, erotic appeal, avarice and vices, many of us get lured, lost and trapped in strange unfathomable uncertainty and sometimes in a living nightmare of sensual indulgence. Cause, we are infatuated with both physical and sense gratifications as we attach without commitment. “

“To add insult to injury, Clarence continued, certain somebody’s --- the so called experts and institutions try to instill standards, convert and conform us to ‘The System’; as technology flexes their muscles and computers do the thinking for us. Ironically, many unworthy hypocrites make a living --- preaching some so called ‘Holy Gospel’ of platitudes or ridiculous rhetoric to us Lost-Souls.”

“Alas, we are engrossed in established policies, lost --- stuck somewhere in-between Reason and Faith, between Science and Religion --- a compromising condition, as the privileged few, the secular powers that be, backed by International Capital, play god. “

“Woe is he, Peg shouted, whom --- settles in the ‘Waste Land’; of conformed confusion. Oh is we, appeasing pawns --- blind fools in our chosen illusion just as Robert Fisher’s ‘Knight in Rusty Armor’. For we hurry and worry about making a living as each assumes his leery position in; ‘The Assigned Establishment’.”

“It’s No Wonder the World is so Fucked-Up. Clarence surmised. For Life is but an encounter and endurance through God’s wonders and our woes. However, mankind wasn’t born to be manipulated or controlled like a herd of cattle. Unfortunately, man doesn’t utilize the readily availability of his preconscious --- a ‘State of Grace’, the ‘Eternal Moment?’ “

“Addicted to Denial, we are burdened by doubt as we avoid the Truth like some Plague. But, vulnerability is merely a product of ignorance. Peace is within everybody. For there are two major undistinguishing factors, a dichotomy governing all the reins of existence --- Fear and Faith. All outcome --- both causes and effects derive as a direct result of either or and; are measured by two prevailing indicators or two classifications --- Good and Evil.”

“Essentially, he added, ‘Either / Or ‘; is the ‘Significance of Choice’, as we all contribute --- Willingly. Be it Pilgrims, Pirates or the Parasites, The Good, the Bad or the Ugly. For Life is a Rainbow of Efforts. Possibilities are endless, as ingenuity and peculiarity are unique. Unfortunately, one man’s Bliss provokes another to tease as Envy is akin to Jealousy. “

“Ironically, he added with tears in his eyes and a lump in his throat, mankind will continue to Fear each other until they have Faith in each other. Destiny awaits our command, Chaos is but an option. Salaciously, man is unpredictable by Nature but, savage by Choice as Poverty is so unnatural, an absolute abomination. Alas, we best Beware of the ‘Fury’; of a Republic Scorned. For as cunning old Fury warned in ‘Alice Through the Looking Glass’, --- ‘I’ll be judge, I’ll be jury, I’ll try the whole cause and, condemn you to death.’ “

Peg shook her head as Clarence got his point across clearly. She realized that historically, man used the Word of God as both a source of Pleasure and Peace and as a tenant of Fear and Damnation. Perhaps, she thought to her-self silently, perhaps it was inevitable as each must reexamine his life. Ironically though, some don't believe in God at all, while some are Soul-Searching and still, others have surrendered to conformed ignorance.

"Peace is a mutual effort! She exclaimed. Negligence is malignant. Arrogance is insulting, detrimental and counter; to purpose and principles of Humanity. For we all long to be Loved as we are afraid of being alone but, we're also afraid of getting hurt. And yet, we continue to hurt each other? "

"Unfortunately, Clarence tried to clarify; Fear is Life's greatest mystery while Faith is its greatest secret. However," he asked whole heartedly, what is the difference between a mystery and a secret? "

Peg stood up and walked over to a bookshelf and grabbed a dictionary. "According to Mr. Webster's definition, she explained, a mystery is something not secret or beyond understanding. ' "

Clarence scratched his head as Peg fingered through the book, then informed that "he defines a secret as 'a specific key to a desired end ' ".

"Bingo! " Clarence shouted.

"So you ask --- what's the big mystery and what's the big secret? There is none as fear is inferior to Faith as it is nothing more than a lack of Faith! ***** He whom cannot accept faith, is doomed to a life of doubt! " "

"What can be more, simple as it all depends on your desired end. Thus, Truth Shall Overcome and We Shall Overcome! But, only --- when we want to? Cause, fear --- like all innovation and inventions is a by-product of imagination. Hence, Ernest Hemingway surmised: 'cowardice, as distinguished from panic, is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend the functions of the imagination. ' "

**** Miracle on 34th. St

“In the future, Clarence continued, Man will Realize that GOD stands for Grand Organizing Designer and that GOD is Everything. Man is but, part of the puzzle. God is Love. Life is but an Evolution of Love. Humanity is the Bottom Line ---Divine Prosperity. “

“Ultimately, Life is a matter of Truth or Consequences as Denial is the Anti Christ. It leads to Typical None-Sense if not Evil or Pretence. Gratitude, Generosity and Compassion are Graces from God, which Co-Exists with envy, greed and jealousy --- Sins of man. These are the forces behind Good and Evil. They define our personalities, refine or corrupt individuality and determine the Destiny of Mankind.”

“Thus, we either have Faith, Trust and Hope in God’s Graces, which bring Peace and Harmony through Love or, fall prey to the Sins of man through ignorance as fear, hate and doubt. Hence, ‘I yam what I yam,’ and you are what you are. And, if and when we are all in fact what we are all supposed to be --- ‘One for All and All for One’ --- Divine Zest. Then and only then will we have Peace on Earth and Good Will for All. For man’s true essence is of Sacred Decree --- LOVE. God ‘IS’, Love! Love is where He’s ‘At’ and, Man will find Peace ‘AS’ he ‘IS’ ‘AT’; One with God --- a Celestial Connection. ”

Peg was most definitely amazed as Clarence’s Sermon was movingly profound. Suddenly, she recalled Arthur Miller’s Play --- ‘Death of a Salesman’. Perhaps the ‘wife’ summed it up best when she realized that ‘a man can’t come into this world with nothing and then go out with nothing! A man has to add up to something! ’

“What is the sum of mankind? “ She asked Clarence. “When ignorance is ignored, he replied, stupidity is justified. Ironically, ‘Popeye the Sailor man’, came closest to being At One with God as he use to profess: ‘I yam what I yam’. Spinach was his symbolic ‘Special Manna’. For man cannot live by bread alone. God told Moses that His Name was Yahweh --- translation, ‘I Am Who Am’ --- Divine Guidance!”

“Unfortunately, Man’s Third Eye is Blinded by a Semblance of Freedom. Clarence continued. The value of Humanity is underestimated. However, eventually Common Sense will be obsolete as man utilizes his Cosmic Sense and finds His place in Nature as the Laws of Nature and Human Nature in Harmony. Perhaps Joseph Campbell summed it up best : ‘ Follow your bliss... As life is not a problem to be solved but a mystery to be lived. ‘Cause’; ---You are that mystery which you are seeking to know.’ “

“In essence; Clarence elaborated; man must learn to Love and Respect Himself before he can commit to his Divine Obligation. Ironically, in our Quest for Truth, we are both the Fool and the Hero as the System requires our Cooperation. Thus, we only fool ourselves when we look for other heroes or saviors. Blessed is he whom ‘Knows Thyself’. And, Blessed is the ‘Outcast’; he whom was not afraid to ‘Stand to Center for Shame in the sight of his fellow gulls’. For as Jonathan Livingston Seagull proclaimed: ‘the only law is that which leads to freedom’. Perhaps he was ahead of his time as he realized that the ‘price of being misunderstood --- is being called God or devil.’ “

Peg just shook her head again --- incredulously as Clarence was getting deep. She couldn’t help herself as she quoted Immanuel Kant out loud “‘Two things fill me with awe, The starry heavens above, And the moral law within.’ “

Clarence smiled as Peg continued by citing Kahlil Gibran “ ‘... we cling to the earth, while the gate or the Heart of the Lord stands wide open, we trample upon the bread of Life, while hunger gnaws at our hearts. How good is Life to Man, yet how far removed is Man from Life?’ “

"Unfortunately, he interrupted, contemporary man believes in logic, questions his faith and at times his own sanity as he can't fathom or perceive miracles. Insidiously astute and empirical, he appropriately demands instant confirmation or verification which he also confutes as ‘mystical ecstasy is rendered to hysteria’. Unfortunately, man is a pathological believer whom interprets to satisfy ideal convenience as we believe at will."

“Ironically, he continued, the Trinity applies not only to Religion but, Science also. Perhaps Father Teilhard de Chardin was right when he stated that ‘Science and Religion would remain enemies as long as they remained strangers. For in actuality, they could supplement each other, even complement each other, as the specifics of Science clarified the speculations of Religion.’

Suddenly, Clarence began to laugh. “What’s so funny?” “Peg asked.

“Attitude, Attention and Awareness; he replied! It’s a matter of Perspective as Interpretation is an enigma? Perhaps there is no greater mystery than man himself. It’s No Wonder we turn to Science, Religion and Myth for Answers. Rumor has it that Cain killed his brother Able.”

“Has Intellect killed Intuition? Are we doomed in the Age of Reason? Where is this ‘Ambrosia’ food of the god’s which gives immortality? What is ‘Special Manna’? Have we forgotten that there were Two Trees in the Garden of Eden?”

“I never thought about it! Peg admitted with excitement. But, you are perfectly correct ---’ So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim’s, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.’ --- Genesis 3:24 “

Clarence smiled as Peg dug deep and quoted from Blake’s poetic revelation ---‘The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.’

““The cherub with his flaming sword is hereby commanded to leave his guard at the tree of life, and when he does, the whole creation will be consumed, and appear infinite, and holy, where as it now appears finite and corrupt. This will come to pass by an improvement of sensual enjoyment. But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul is to be expunged. If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro’ the narrow chinks of his cavern. ‘ “

“Historically, man is so oblivious, reckless, so malicious and ruthless with reality? Clarence interjected. Good intentions don’t always produce best results. Especially when greed gets involved as man is dishonest with him-self. Poverty is excruciating proof.

Unfortunately, we humans can be so; lazy as many get lost in convenience? Perhaps it's the Nature of the Beast --- dualism, Good and Evil. Prudence is the Bottom Line! Consciousness objection is Divine! Don't let Greed become You."

"Is Conscience a noun or a verb?" Peg asked perplexed. "As a verb, Clarence replied, thinking is involved per Intellect. But as a noun --- Intuition, man already knows right from wrong, as intellect is inferior to Intuition. For what is Imagination without Destination? What is Fear, when you have Faith? What is Faith without God? What is Greed when there is no need? Perhaps it's no small wonder that the Heart is the international symbol for Love!"

"Perhaps, Peg surmised, we are all like King Arthur as Passion is our Magical sword --- 'Excalibur', in our 'Quest for the Holy Grail' --- Spiritual Perfection, Love, Truth and Peace?"

"There have been many tales written throughout history about man searching for Truth. Clarence responded. Take the sailing of the Seven Seas for instance. How many different references are there? Joseph Campbell believed that Myths are Sacred. Ironically, Science professes Evolution, Religion Preaches Adam, Eve, the infamous 'Apple' and the 'Devilish Snake'. In Greek Mythology, Prometheus the Giant was crucified for stealing Fire --- Reason as Truth from Zeus and giving it to mere mortal mankind. But, 'Hope' floats to the top of 'Pandora's Box'."

"And, he continued, Jesus was a rebel messenger, whom had Divine Audacity, as he stood up to Established Authority with his Beliefs --- Blasphemy; and humbly walked with the --- 'Cross', our burden, the 'Woodwork' --- to His Death; professing His Message that the --- Truth is Within each and everyone of Us as All Humans have Eternal Life."

Peg was overwhelmed by the different legends. "Was Jesus and Prometheus referring to the same Truth? She asked sincerely.

“Not quite, Clarence responded profoundly. It’s like comparing apples and oranges but, remember as rumor has it --- where ‘The Apple’ got us. Actually, Prometheus gave man the Divine Bait, Reason which also led to the Fall of Mankind. For Truth is beyond Reason. Jesus was telling man to look deeper as the Truth lies within All of Us. There is Hope for Mankind! Like an Orange, you have to dig inside, peel away past the skin. Hence, ‘know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you’“. I Cor.6:19

“Jesus died in the Name of ‘Gestalt’; --- ‘Good Grief’. Clarence assured. For time is neither here nor there as Energy is but Perpetual Motion --- Vibrating, Accordingly. Thus, Precognition and Retro-cognition are but sensuous states of Awareness --- In Tune with the Infinite as all is a part of this Great Divine. Alas, Jesus promised: ‘he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do.’ (John 14:12). “

“According to the Hindu Religion, Being is but Energy and Energy varies in its Degree through our Seven Charkas which emanates the Human Aura as to how enlightened a person is. Thus, when a man balances his Seven Wheels of Energy or Seven Charkas, he will realize Peace. And, Clarence asked, what about John’s Vision of The Book of Revelations as the great Tribulation of the Seven Seals? “

“I don’t know. Peg admitted. What about it? “

“According to Edgar Cayce, Clarence continued, whose advice both Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla sought and cherished, the Seven Seals are the Seven Charkas of Yoga in man as the Great Tribulation is Within Man Himself.”

“It proves your point that Man is at War with Self. Peg deducted as she thought of ‘Pogo’; ‘We have met the enemy, and he is us’“. She recited.

“Carl Jung believed that man’s charkas were gateways of the conscious. Clarence added specifically. Unfortunately, so many of us are lost or stuck at one of our seven seas as we are the captain of our own ship, whom is overwhelmed by irresistible, captivating sensation, movements, thoughts, memories and dreams as Intuition is neglected and ignored. Marge was a perfect example until she utilized her Heart Charka.”

“Very interesting; Peg was fascinated as she appreciated how enlightened Emerson truly was and shared it with Clarence. “Standing on the bare ground....All mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing, I see all; The currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or particle of God. ‘ “

“The Heart Charka is the whole key. Clarence testified. It’s emotional in Nature and Akin to Intuition as Love is Divine. Someday it will unite man’s three lower charkas which are Physical in Nature with his three upper charkas, which are Mental in Nature via the Central Nervous System --- Gray-Matter. Thus, the left brain which is Intellectual --- Yang, our Western side and the right brain --- which is Intuitional --- Yin, our Eastern side will work in Harmony as man will be at Peace. For Intuition is the Holy Grail, Your Congenial Birth-rite, a Consecrated Blessing in Disguise. “

“ Sir Charles Sherrington called it ‘The Enchanted Loom’, The Brain and Mind Connection, Our Virtual Vista, the Central Nervous System --- our two separate Brains and our Seven Charkas which will Unite our Conscious and Unconscious Minds, the Individual with the Universal. “

“It sounds promising. Peg hoped. Synchronicity, a literal meeting of Intellect and Intuition as Intuition is the Tree of Eternal Life. But, it seems so complicated. ”

“We are now in the Age of Aquarius, The Age of Miracles. Clarence assured. Man makes life so complicated as we try to avoid the rules. But, like Edgar Cayce proclaimed; ‘the laws of the universe continue to operate even when ignored.’ For Eternity is Watching!”

“Man’s rules are inferior to God’s as Jesus proclaimed: ‘there are three that bear witness on Earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these agree in one.’ (I John 5:8). “

“Love is the answer to all of man’s problems. Love shall over come --- evil, fear and doubt as Love ensures Faith. Eventually, man will learn to; Believe in Thee --- in God, Self and Each Other as Man is the Living, Collective Bible --- Unfolding in the Fullness of Time. Marge found the Faith to let go and Forgive and she Realized that ‘Grace Happens’ as she found Peace through Love. “

“Someday, mankind will balance his Mind, Soul and Body or Spirit, Water and Blood and thereby --- develop and utilize his Third-Eye. Blessed is he whom can see his own Aura. For your Aura is but a reflection, a distinct emanation of your True Self! Evil is but wrong living as it is ‘Live’, spelled backwards.”

Peg was proud of Clarence as his rational made Perfect Cosmic Sense. It was so simple yet profound and intriguing. Subconsciously, Mankind has the ‘Cosmic Blues’; but, he also has access to ‘The Burning Bush’ --- Existential Certitude, a Central Core of Being. She found new meaning in ‘Seek and Ye shall Find, Ask and Ye shall Receive, Knock and the Door will Open’. She kissed him and excused herself since she had to go to the bathroom.

Suddenly, she thought of her favorite motion picture, ‘The Wizard of Oz’. ‘There’s no place like home’. ‘There’s no place like home’, kept popping in her mind? But she wondered, where is Home? Heaven, the ‘Garden of Eden’? Is Heaven on Earth possible with so many --- ‘Lions and Tigers and Bears --- Oh My? She Laughed. Perhaps life is a jungle however, who made it that way?

“After all these years she asked Clarence before she left. Why do we continue to Act like a bunch of little ‘Munchkins’, so immature as we actually believe in a physical yellow or should I specify --- ‘Golden Brick Road’? Pacified by lollypops, broken promises, drugs and booze, we accept as we bestow honor, prestige and trust on our ‘Mayor’ --- the Political Pukes as well as Wall Street, and the Federal Reserve since we need them to lead, reassure and control us like a herd of animals? “

“Alas’ she continued furiously, domesticated, we --- the people have forgotten that we are All, Blessed with a Heart and a Brain --- Complements of our Divine Wizard. Hence, it’s no wonder that the parasites continue to underestimate us, as they insult our intelligence and assault our intuition, while we fear --- lost and frightened like imbeciles or ’Imp-A-Souls’, searching for a Wizard of Oz, a Guru or a Cult Leader?”

“Fear Not! Clarence assured. Someday, mankind will muster the ‘Courage’ to Unite; his ‘Heart’ and his ‘Brain’ and Act Naturally. For the Alarming Inequality of Existence is a Motivating Cause for Concern. It’s Our Sacred Duty, Our Mission to accept the Challenge in the Name of Humanity as the Road to Freedom --- Home Is Paved, with Truth. But first, each must Decide; which ‘Witch’ he is; A ‘Good Witch’ or a ‘Bad Witch’? For Home is where the Heart is! Eventually, our World must choose to Unite“.

Peg smiled. She felt relieved but, Clarence knew better since she was all bent over, holding her stomach. “You best hurry before you piss your pants. He warned. I’ll be up later”.

She exited as quick; as she could under the circumstances. Clarence sat there in utter silence for a few minutes. He thought about how happy Marge was before her dreadful ordeal. He was glad that she passed in Peace. He said a few prayers for her.

Suddenly, T. S. Eliot consumed his mind. ---- ‘Music heard so deeply that it is not heard at all. But you are the music while the music lasts.’

He smiled as he vowed to adhere to Joseph Campbell as All Must --- ‘Follow his Bliss’. It is our duty as each and every one, has work to do. “I intend to make a difference! He promised himself. But first, I must compose in honor of Marge.”

Believe in Thee

There is a book, with a guarantee
 Glory be, Salvation is no --- mystery
 So take a look, take heed, spend some time and read

120

You gotttaa takeee --- controlll
Trust with your heart and soul
There is no free ride
Trust you conscience to be-- your guide
And believe in Thee
You gotta believe in Thee
And if you believe in Thee
Then destiny, you'll achieve your destiny

So follow your dreams and pay your dues
Consider in love, the steps you choose
Cause some you'll win but when you loose
Ride the waves through your blues
Ascension, Ascension, fear, regret and greed --- will fools
Ascension, Ascension, intuition is the key
Fly free --- on the Wings of Truth
So believe in Thee, Just believe in Thee
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Chapter Eight --- Peace and Closure in Paradise

The following morning, Marge was laid out in her own bed at Social Security, in the living room. She was wearing a blossom print dress as well as her 'Grace Happens' tee-shirt. The residents paid their respects throughout the day. Flowers, Graced the whole building.

Chi showed up at 6:45 PM with Brandie, Jim-Jim and Baby Mayan. All Four sported the tee-shirts as did the Minister and the rest of the Tribe. The Minister led a few prayers and blessed everyone. Chi and Clarence delivered the Eulogy and Peg sang 'Believe in Thee'. There wasn't a dry eye in the commune as even Baby Mayan cried as did Jim-Jim, whom was a brat and got his feelings hurt.

The hearse came at 7:30 PM, to escort Marge to the crematorium. Chi and Brandie paid their final respects before they left with the two kids. Clarence and Peg drove along with Marge. Max, Anna, Henry, and Lucy Followed in one car, Serge, Old Joe, Eva, Sexy Sue and Jacques in another. The rest of the gang piled into the bus. Once she entered the insinuator, they said a few prayers and left, destination --- Denny's.

Chi was presented with Marge's ashes a few days later, in a solid-gold-Urn. Jacques cooked up an extra special brunch on Sunday. After they ate, the tribe went to the garden. There was a huge arched sign attached to a trellis with the words inscribed; 'Welcome to Marge's Paradise'; Our 'Garden of Remembrance'! Clarence got the honors as he spread her ashes throughout the entire garden including, the area where Old Joe's Special Plants grew.

Old Joe wheeled out a Japanese Cherry Blossom Tree to Commemorate Marge. Several residents helped him plant it. Afterwards, they all drank Bloody-Mary's as Thomas and Old Joe toked together.

Suddenly, there was a big commotion as well as a putrid odor. Thomas was yelling and screaming as two nurses wheeled him away --- against his will. Clarence scratched his head with perplexed concern, a habitual act of intuition. He had been denying it but his conscience was getting to him, not to mention his nose as his memory served him with --- review, examination and scrutiny.

Ultimately, Thomas was out of control as he lost complete control of his bodily functions --- shitting and pissing himself repeatedly. Unfortunately, this was the forth or fifth uproar this week. Ironically, not only did he lose his dignity but also, his regard for others as he had no sense of shame?

Clarence was dumbstruck. Is Thomas addicted, he wondered? Perhaps he is a chain-toker but, is it justified by his pain? Or, does he just like getting high? He was warned about being discrete with his special medication and yet, he flaunts it proudly.

When is enough, enough? He asked himself. Can Thomas cope without it? Does it jeopardize our Commune? Would prohibition be betrayal? Clarence was beside himself. He decided to consult with the doctors and staff, which were a special tight nit group.

Peg analyzed Clarence's worry. "His body is shutting down. She explained. It's part of the process. I'm surprised that he still breathes on his own. He won't be smoking his stash much longer. Soon, he'll be bed-ridden as 'advancing cancer entails chronic pain which is a situation rather than an event. 'It only gets worst and demands attention as it isolates one from the world around him. To add insult to injury, depression, anxiety, fear and frustration take their toll. "

Clarence was speechless as he was getting his consultation now.

"Soon, Peg continued, he will need an injection every four hours, probably --- Morphine. Unfortunately it is usually addicting as a compulsive, overpowering crave for not only Relief from Pain but, for its Psychological effects as well. Ultimately, Thomas knows that It's; only a matter of time as he is dying. Some accept it; others deny it as they fight till the end. But, you can't ignore "Death. It is but a fact of Life."

Clarence trusted her judgment and left it at that. He kissed her on the forehead and said, "Thank You"! Then he asked; do you want to go to the beach, I have to clear my head, unwind".

"But of course;" she replied and, off they went!

It took another week or so, but Peg proved to be right. Slowly but surely, day by day, Thomas got worst until finally, he was bed-ridden. He was on Oxygen. The pain got worst by the minute, especially since he was diagnosed with emphysema. "No more smoking". The doctors warned. Ironically though, he was delighted with the morphine.

The Commune was concerned. They felt sorry that Thomas wouldn't be going to Mexico. However, he insisted that they go and have a good time. He promised that he'd be here waiting --- when they returned. He wanted them to bring a video camera. They agreed. He was incoherent when they left several days later. All were excited in spite of Thomas situation as they accepted the fact that he was dying. Besides, he insisted.

Carlos was like a little kid, waiting for a present. He left Mexico over seventy years ago and had never been back since. Back then, he couldn't read or write; he barely spoke English. Thus, he never kept in contact as time seemed to slip away. Unfortunately, there was never enough money to go back.

Ironically, he was born in a small village near Guadalajara, where they were landing. The Amigos' promised to take him on a special trip to look up his hometown. He prayed that he'd find a long lost relative or some offspring.

The residents of Social Security looked like some gang at the airport before they entered their private plane. They got a lot of laughs and stares. Lucy managed to sweet talk her way into the cockpit as she was no longer afraid of flying but most curious as it made her feel closer to her father as if he were there beside her.

Clarence felt guilty as well as selfish. He expressed his feelings to Peg. "How many mean what they say and say what they mean?" He asked her.

“What do you mean? She asked back.

“Society takes words for granted! He tried to explain. But words are complicated by the Living Word --- Man, Himself! Death is a scary thought. It’s a personal Transition but, No-body should be alone when they die. I should have stayed with Thomas and held his hand as he Passed On.”

Peg smiled as she reached for Clarence’s hand. They were kindred souls. Suddenly Clarence insisted, “I must go back! His words were but an excuse, permission but, he is probably scared to death about dying.”

“Permission is as Sacred as Sacrifice, Peg assured. It is a Sacrifice in its own Rite. Respect his Wishes. Sometimes, it’s good to be alone. Thomas’s permission was a Gift to all of us from his Heart. It made him feel better in spite of the fact that he is dying. ”

Clarence just listened with discern as Peg continued. “Thomas is in God’s hands now. Unfortunately, he could suffer for months, even a year or more. I’ll make a phone call when we land and have Hospice stay with him till we return.”

Clarence smiled but Peg kept right on encouraging him. “We have our hands full, we have over five dozen or so; family members to keep our eyes on. They all look up to you for guidance. We must all stick together. This is a chance in a lifetime, let’s make it memorable.”

Clarence reached over and stole a kiss as a voice sounded out loud and clear over the intercom. “This is your Co-Captain Lucy speaking. Get your asses in you seats and your belts on. Prepare for landing.”

When they landed, they fit right in except for the custom stitching, as a bunch of locals were also sporting ponchos and sombreros. Carlos actually; jumped for Joy after he bent down and literally kissed the ground. He then proceeded to hug and kiss everyone in sight as he became the center of attention at Guadalajara International Airport.

He conversed with everybody and anyone; --- in Spanish, dropping family names and word, where he’d be staying. A taxi-bus was waiting in the parking lot. Peg called Social Security and arranged for Hospice to assist Thomas while the Tribe was loading into the bus.

The resort --- 'Rio Caliente', was only fifty minutes away. Carlos's hometown --- 'Tlaquepaque, was only fifteen minutes away. He was anxious but they had a schedule to keep. Clarence promised to bring him back tomorrow.

Carlos understood but insisted that he had to visit Tequila Volcano before he left. He said that it would bring back memories as he played there often as a kid on his uncle's farm near the Town of Tequila.

"Tequila Volcano; Serge asked? It's no wonder that shit knocks me on my ass. What's it made out of --- Volcanic Ash?"

Clarence and Carlos laughed as the bus driver explained that "Genuine Tequila is only manufactured in one of two municipalities, either that of Tequila or that of Arandas, northeast of here. Many a brawl has broken out because of arguments; about which is best. For we take pride in our National Beverage."

"I am a defender of Senor Jose Antonio de Cuervo. Carlos Sanchez bragged. My twin hermana, Teresa and I tended to the Agave Tequilana Plants on his Great-Great-Great-Grandson's farm when we were juven.

"Well then, the driver answered, you are in luck as the town of Tequila is near Rio Caliente and the Cuervo family is still very active in the town."

Carlos was in his glory, he only hoped that someone was alive --- old enough to remember him. Pedro, the bus driver apologized for not politely introducing himself properly. Then he explained that the town --- "Tequila itself, dates from soon after the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the area, led by the barbarous Nuno de Guzman. Legend has it that it's name supposedly derives from 'Place of Tricks' or 'Place of Those Who Pay Tribute'."

"It lies in the shadow of an imposing 9000 foot volcano. It is a 10 mile drive from the center of town on a cobble stone road to the top of Tequila Volcano. It provides breath-taking views, overlooking the country side. Rapid changes of flora occur with increasing altitude. You can see over 50 species of birds on a good day --- including the exotic Mot Mot, Orioles, the Squirrel-Tailed Cuckoo and hummingbirds. The tropical plants are so tranquil --- the Bougainvillea, Jacaranda, Montezuma Pine and Tropical Palm, just to name a few."

“Mucho Gracias! Mucho Gracias!” Carlos thanked Pedro for the Memories.

As the bus rolled out of the airport, Pedro welcomed everybody over the microphone. He introduced himself to the rest of the clan and stated that he’d be their guide.

“You’ll Love our climate! He assured. National Geographic rates it among the top two on Earth. Known as ‘Eternal Spring’, the weather is always on your side at Rio Caliente nestled in the foothills of the Sierra la Primavera, a magnificent belt of pine forested, ex-volcanic mountains. It is a National Forest and Rio Caliente itself is a hot river.”

“Soon“, he continued, we will be passing through the village of Primavera and the Primavera Forest itself. The companeros were at Peace. The area was an Oasis, so soothing to the eyes, so Nurturing and Natural. They felt safe and comfy as if they were on another Planet. They couldn’t wait to get deeper in the varied Ecology.

When they arrived at Rio Caliente, they were greeted by the staff and overwhelmed by hospitality. The Sanctuary had a lot to offer as it was a hot springs, health spa and nature resort. All the cottages were charming. They displayed hand-crafted furniture, pretty woven fabrics, their own fireplace and a private geo-thermal tub/shower. There were two heated mineral lap pools, two private (his and her) mineral plunge pools, the Volcanic Aztec steam room and a massage, beauty and health complex.

Old Joe was impressed with the organic vegetable garden. Eva, Betty and Edna wanted to go horse back riding but, they had to wait till after dinner. Peg and Lucy made an appointment for a detoxifying mud-wrap, facial, pedicure and manicure.

Sexy Sue couldn’t keep her eyes off the young seniors’. She was flirting with a handsome masseur. Jacques was a bit jealous but his eyes wandered just as much as the señoritas’ were gorgeous. Suddenly, there was a big commotion around the pool area. The guys were going wild as Tanya was practicing her belly dancing.

The more they hooted, hollered and whistled, the more she giggled, jiggled and wiggled. It was electrifying. She had so much energy, she could of danced all night but, cena was being served and, all were famished. She promised to entertain later and give lessons to the ladies.

After dinner, Eva, Betty and Edna organized a horseback excursion. About a dozen others participated. Tanya kept her promise and the guys kept their eyes on Tanya. All but Serge, he was nowhere to be found.

Sexy Sue was jealous. She felt deprived until she learned the art. She mastered the technique naturally. Peg and Lucy tried as did a few others but, they all gave up. Eventually, the excitement got boring.

The Sunset was unforgettable. Except for Serge and the trail-riders, all others watched it from the pools, sipping freshly squeezed juices. Henry proposed a toast to the Sun. Carlos added, "Salud; Health"! And; Max didn't hear a word as he was lost --- practicing the Art of Doing Nothing.

Clarence felt much better; the complex was so unpretentious, so unspoiled --- pure and intoxicating. They didn't need any alcohol. He took one look at Peg and he knew that he'd get lucky later tonight. She had that look --- sparkles in her eyes. The atmosphere was so romantic and inviting.

He was glad they came. He could get addicted to its Simplicity. It was contagious. He only wished that Marge and Thomas were here. He felt sorry for Thomas and, he missed Marge. Ironically though, he laughed as he thought --- 'She gone. But, she ain't gone'.

"Did you see that spectacular Sunset"; Eva queried with excitement as they returned from their adventure? It was breathtaking, soothing for the Soul! "

"It surrre wawasss"; Lucy stuttered before she jumped right back into the heated pool.

"It's a cool fifty-degree winter night"; hollered one of the lifeguards.

"That's why we have fireplaces and don't forget the Volcanic Aztec steam room"; another shouted!

Everybody started to laugh as nobody dared to come out.

“Psychophysics”; shouted Tanya. It’s all in your head. ‘Mind over matter’; --- Psycho kineses. You have control over your body. That’s one of many Secrets in Life“.

Clarence got out of the pool --- immediately. He was freezing but, he kept his Cool or should we say Cold --- hidden as he wanted to set an example. Soon, one by one, the others followed as Tanya and the life guards clapped, laughed and cheered.

After they made Love by the fire, Peg thought about what Tanya had said --- ‘mind over matter’. “Man must make an effort, she realized out loud, to make your theory work. We must take control of our own lives! Self Awareness is a Marvel. Thales hit the nail on the head when he proclaimed: ‘Know Thyself!’ We must Observe, Examine and Choose --- It’s either Self-Deception en-route to Self-Destruction or, Self-knowledge, en-route to Self-Liberation ---Enlightenment. “

Clarence smiled; he was both pleased and proud that Peg wasn’t a Self-Centered Fool. Without a doubt, she ‘Believed in Thee’ as she Respected Cosmic Consciousness. “Self-Discovery is Astonishing; man is but an Extension of Good and evil. Patience as well as Persistence; are both Sacred“, he assured as he rolled over and hugged her before they fell fast asleep --- naked by the fire.

They woke up early in the morning and took a walk by the Rio Caliente; ‘Hot River’. They were surprised as half of the Commune was, already there --- admiring the awesome steam; lingering as it collided with the Fresh Air. Eventually it rose slowly --- up, up and away past the mountains, to make room for an encore.

After breakfast, Clarence, Carlos, Max and Henry rented a car. They had business to attend --- in the name of Closure for Carlos. Serge was still nowhere to be found. But, he left word at the mess hall; that he was looking up some old friends.

“Maybe he has some --- Hot Senorita! “ Max surmised. “Perhaps, Clarence interjected; he must have been here before. How else would he know about this Paradise? “

“Lucy seen him last night, Henry added, talking to some younger guy --- up on the hill. He waved to her from a distance. “

The map seemed simple enough. Clarence drove as Max and Henry were the co-pilots and Carlos Delighted in his Glory. The countryside was stupefying, even more Beautiful, than it was observed from their bus ride. Perhaps it took the eyes time to adjust as their brains had to identify through indulgence as they acclimated --- Naturally as culture shock wore off.

They stopped in the village of Primavera before they proceeded to Carlo's hometown. He wanted his presence to be known as he left word at local businesses that Carlos Sanchez edad --- noventa-trehss, whom hailed from Tlaquepaque, was looking for family and old friends. He was told that there were several Sanchez families on the outskirts of the village. In fact, Jose the barbaro was a Sanchez. Needless to say, they all scurried off to the barber shop in a flash.

Carlos introduced himself and they exchanged family history. "Believe it or not, Jose proclaimed, my great second cousin on my father's side --- Teresa Ortez edad --- noventa-alguna cosa, lives ten, twelve miles away on a big farm with her hija --- Maria. She is the niece of my Great Great Grandfather Mateo Sanchez.

"Si! Si! Tio Mateo! Tio Mateo! Carlos shouted as he hugged and kissed his great second or third cousin. Take me to see my gemelo hermana Teresa! Gustar! Gustar"; Carlos demanded --- elated beyond belief as he passed a bottle of tequila which he bough from somebody at the airport.

"Bebida! Bebida; he insisted as Clarence took a swig so that he didn't offend him. Henry and Max obliged as well, even though they promised the girls that they wouldn't drink on the trip. Jose made it unanimous

Tension mounted on the short drive to Closure. Carlos was thrilled and anxious but nervous as he braced himself. He confessed that he never believed in his wildest dreams that he'd be reunited with Teresa. "Would she be mad; at me for not coming home sooner; he asked all jittery?

"Better later than never, Clarence assured, calming the worry on his face.

“Cousin Teresa is a Saint. Jose informed. She’ll --- Welcome you with open arms! She doesn’t get mad at nobody, no how. Everybody is Always Welcomed to Her House. “

The adobe farm house was huge but worn. A dozen people lived in it, including --- Maria’s Grand-son Pablo and his wife Paula, their seven children and one nephew --- Carlos. The furnishing; were plain and simple. There was no running water or indoor bathroom. Chickens, goats, pigs, cows, dogs and cats littered the area as well as several junk cars. They were poor to say the least.

Teresa was so excited that she fainted when she embraced her brother. He thought that she died of a heart attack but, Jose brought her around to a glorious reunion.

“No worry, Ma-Ma as healthy as a cabalgadura. Maria exclaimed; too, too much excitement, a shocking, unexpected visit. She’ll be alright, she continued as she gave her mother a cup of aguar.

“Carlos, Carlos; mi caro hermano; she cried. “Adonde os esconder? Nosotros pensamiento os finado.”

“No! No! “Carlos answered, “mi aca! Hallar mi familia! He continued as he picked up one of his little great, great, great nephews. The Amigos’ had tears in their eyes as it was oh so touching. Carlos passed his bottle around and even Teresa had a swallow. Paula fetched some lemonade and home-made deserts as she was a good hostess. She explained to the guys that Teresa didn’t speak English.

The reacquainted siblings Carlos and Teresa chattered a mile a minute as if nobody else were there. She told him that she raised twelve children and, they were all still alive. He had sixty-two nieces and nephews thanks to Teresa, not to mention all the cousins, on his Uncle Mateo’s side. Not bad considering the fact that their mother died giving birth to them and their father, shortly after in a farm accident. Unfortunately, her Husband Miguel died ten years ago but, they had a productive life together.

Carlos told her that he would be in town for another six days but, she insisted that he not leave her sight. “Yo jamas boda. Yo migratorid obrero. Yo bendito ---- retirado familia comunidad.”

She was glad that Carlos was happy and alive and well as they sat there holding hands. The Amigos' were anxious to get back as they felt out of place. Pablo offered to take Carlos back when ever he decided. They all agreed but, Carlos called Clarence to the side.

He wanted him to call Chi and have him draw up papers for a will for his realized family. Clarence explained that it was more complicated than that as he would need all their names. He suggested that maybe he might want to transfer cash. After all, even if he only sends half, of \$ 1,000,000.00; that would surly go a long way down here in Mexico. Carlos agreed to wait and talk personally with Chi.

As The Amigos' headed back; Peg, Lucy and Old Joe took turns manning the video camera. They captured the Beautiful scenery as well as the activities. But, you had to be there to realize the significance. After all, how can you emphasize the appreciation of the Art of Doing Nothing? Ironically, Simplicity is foreign back home ---- where hurry and worry dictate as 'day-to-day misery is at the Mercy of Moody Emotions'.

Joe got close with another resident --- Patrick whom was also Irish. Joe elaborated on how glad he was to be here, not to mention a 'Member' of the Commune. "So many grow old, cold, miserable and callused; he explained; but 'Social Security' taught me how to Love again! "

Patrick knew that Joe was homeless for years as he stated that they were both Lucky. "Friends and Family are the Most Precious things in Life besides One's Health. 'Social Security' is a Treasure. I'm a millionaire thanks to Chi. He continued. But that doesn't matter as I've been there before --- way back when a million dollars was worth something. I was on top of the world, so to speak, --- cars, houses, wife, mistress, family and friends. I was King of the Hill in my neighborhood. But then, suddenly --- overnight, I was broke, as Life is one Big Gamble."

Joe sat there --- listening as Patrick summarized his life. "I lost everything as my business went under. I wallowed in disbelief and denial. But the hardest part about being Down and Out; were all the excuses. I blamed everybody but myself. Ironically, I even made up excuses for my friends and family whom snickered and avoided me as if I had the plague. "

Old Joe enjoyed his little chat as he could relate to Patrick's Poetry with the same sediments. People use to avoid him like a leper as money talks and appearance speaks loud and clear. He use to want to disappear as people actually pretended that he wasn't even there anyway. Thus, he Thanked God for being here -- - Now as well as for his Reunion with Anna. Perhaps, he thought to himself, maybe someday Patrick will be Lucky and meet someone from his past. Second chances are Sacred.

The Amigos' arrived back at the retreat in time for lunch. The Commune was pleased when they heard that Carlos was staying with his sister and a bunch of relatives. "It's funny how life's path twists and turns and yet, can come full circle. Old Joe stated with delight. Peace entails a bit of Closure. "

Everybody agreed between bites as they devoured their meal. They spent the rest of the day relaxing as they took advantage of Mother Nature as well as the accommodating facilities. 'Eternal Spring' was the place to be and, they were, enjoying every minute of it.

Several days past too swiftly; between shopping; sight seeing and doing nothing. Serge was scarcely seen and there was no word from Carlos. The following morning, they went to Tequila Volcano. Serge made the trip but, he got drunk.

When they returned to Rio Caliente, Jose Sanchez was there waiting --- with sad news as Carlos died earlier that afternoon in his sister Teresa's arms. Apparently, his heart gave out. The Commune was stunned as Betty and Edna cried for their Lover. Serge felt sick as he went to sleep it off --- somewhere?

Jose expressed his family's gratitude as they had a Wonderful three days with Carlos. "God works in mysterious ways! He said; but, it was as if Carlos was on a mission as he just had to come Home to 'Rest in Peace'! "

Clarence asked about the arrangements and assured him that they'd be there to pay their last respects. He also informed that they would be leaving Mexico in two days. Jose thanked him and said that there would be a celebration tomorrow after the burial near the farmhouse.

That night, Clarence called Chi with the news. He gave him the heads-up on Carlos's wishes. Chi assured him that there were ways to transfer the money and avoid inheritance taxes. He'd set up a charity fund from one nonprofit organization to another.

The following morning, both Families paid their respects. The funeral was simple and dignified. A Padre gave a Special Sermon. Clarence said a few words on behalf of the entire Commune. He also stated that they would plant a Tree in The Garden of Remembrance, in Honor of Carlos.

Betty and Edna cried like babies. His Mexican Family was confused as they couldn't comprehend which one was his Lover. Some; giggled others were shocked and stunned as rumor spread fast.

There was plenty of food, singing, dancing, Tequila and Mexican Beer. During the celebration, Peg whom spoke fluent Spanish, accompanied by Clarence, had a private meeting with Teresa and Maria. They were overjoyed as they decided to divide the money equally among their entire Family. "Mucho Gracias Jesus;" echoed out of their mouths! They were told that Chi would fly down to Mexico next week with the paper work. It would be another month or so before they got their money. They couldn't wait to tell the Families the News. Needless to say, it was a Dream Come True ---- Pasmoso as the celebration turned into a Celebration, Thanks to Carlos Sanchez!

The following morning, the Four Amigos' were all up early --- watching the steam condense --- Naturally. They decided to take a quick drive in the rent a car. Serge grabbed a bottle of Tequila from the stash in his room. They opened it at the small cemetery, poured a little on his grave and Toasted --- Hasta la vista Carlos!

When they returned, everybody was practicing their Meditation and Yoga. When they finished, there was a special brunch before the return trip --- Home. As the plane took off, all had tears in their eyes as Carlos was on their minds. It was a Memorable Trip Indeed as they --- Mastered the Art of Doing; Nothing and, Enjoyed It!

Chapter Nine --- Compassion, Mercy, Confession; Plus

The four Amigos' were playing Pinochle, shooting the Shit; when Henry announced: "Rumor has it that Thomas can't take it any longer. He hallucinates often --- Talks to Marge? He says that he doesn't want to die --- All Doped Up! But, he just can't take the pain or make it stop without the morphine. Frankly, he wants to die with a clear head! He keeps begging the doctors for Euthanasia. However, they decline --- citing Dr. Jack Kevorkian".

"What about Hypnosis;" asked Clarence?

"It's worth a shot!" They all agreed. They consulted with the doctors whom thought that it might be a good idea. Dr. Gloria Tibet, a Clinical Psychologist and close friend of Peg's, agreed to put Thomas under. Ultimately, it worked.

Unfortunately, Thomas was getting bored and tired of waiting for Death. He was lonely as he longed to participate but, was too weak. Eventually, he asked for Euthanasia again --- constantly as he accepted his Death.

"Existing is Not Living; Thomas insisted seriously to Clarence. The Thrill is gone. I'm agonizing in Shame --- piss and shit in my pants as I speak --- reeking. It's pretty bad, when you can't stand your own smell. Release me Please, Please; I'm begging you for a rite of passage! Just bring me El'Caramba".

Clarence had a lump in his throat and an ache in his chest as he felt for Thomas's predicament. Shit, he thought to himself. Someday I might be in the same boat. I'd probably want Death too. "I'll talk it over with the Amigos'. He promised before he left as Thomas smiled --- Sincerely.

"I chatted with Thomas this afternoon and I sympathize with his plight. Clarence stated as he dealt the cards. A right to Die is as Sacred as a right to Live. He's not crazy, senile or drugged. He's desperate however; he has a right to choose --- his own Death.

Death is but a fact of Life; he continued. Ironically, so many are afraid to deal with it, let alone face their own Death. But not Thomas Manheart, as he is begging for it. He needs a little help from his friends. "

"What do you have in mind?" Henry asked reluctantly.

“He wants a gun. Clarence replied. But we can’t afford a suicide as we don’t need any negative publicity. “

“As I see it, Serge interjected. Death is inevitable, Life is but an option. Truth is Simple. Death is the Bottom Line as Man Is Born to Die. Why suffer in prolonged agony. We must Grant his Wish in the name of Mercy as Free-Will, a Right to Die. “

After discussing Thomas’s grief, they decided to get involved in conspiracy as Serge grabbed four plastic stir-sticks and cut them into different sizes. “Who wants to go first”; he asked as he held destiny in his hands. Henry lost, as he was the unlucky participant with the displeasure to execute misery.

Nervously he stuttered --- “Ga Ga God, wha wha whata I gotta do?”

“Nothing; Serge responded. Fuck God! Where was He or Marge’s Guardian Angels --- all those times when she was being raped? And where was God when Thomas was pulverized by that sick bastard. I’ll take care of it! I still have one ball left! I got plenty of practice in Korea and Nam”.

“Thanks! “ Henry said as he wiped the sweat from his brow.

“Forget about it! Serge replied. I’ll see you guys latter. I have to take care of something. “

After Serge left the complex, Henry felt much better but, “how is he going to take care of it? “ He wondered out loud.

“He knows what to do. “ Clarence assured most definitely.

“Where does he go everyday without exception”; Max asked curiously again?

“I haven’t the vaguest? Henry answered. It’s as if he is living a double life. He is always gone at least a few hours a day.”

“And what about; on the Mexican vacation? Max added. He only hung out with us the last two and a half days? “

“Awe, he’s just a private sort of guy. Clarence defended. Mind your own business. He probably looked up an old fling in Mexico. He traveled half the world you know. What, are you two jealous? Perhaps someday we’ll get to meet his lover, perhaps --- lovers. If not, then --- so be it“!

“I’m hungry! “ Max changed the subject.

“Me too; Clarence agreed! Let’s get some shitty-canoes“. “Yah; Henry agreed unanimously; I can go for a few of them scum dogs”.

When they got back home, the guys were too nervous to do anything, let alone go to bed. They decided to wait up for Serge as they watched TV. Henry got instant heart-burn in anticipation but blamed it on the Texas hotdogs.

Serge rolled in about 1AM, waved to the Amigos’ and headed up stairs.

“Why is he so damn secretive? Max asked. Is he gonna do it tonight or when“?

The other two shook their heads in ignorance as Serge was up in Thomas’s bedroom.

Alexander Pope overshadowed his mind with inspiration as Thomas looked up at him and smiled; ‘this long disease, my life.’ He bent down with tears in his eyes and a deadly pillow in his hands and sent Thomas to his maker. “Adios Amigo“, he whispered as he left the room.

He returned to the family room to his anxious, confused and concerned Amigos’. He knew from experience that it was easy to kill somebody but, hard to live with it. "Get the Jack." He snapped. “It’s a done deal. Amen“!

They all toasted to Thomas --- confidently. They promised not to tell anybody about their involvement as some secrets are meant to be secret.

“Speaking of secrets, Max asked nonchalantly; what did you mean about having one ball left“?

“My right nut got blown off in Viet Nam. He confided sadly. They all started to laugh at Serge’s misfortune as they just couldn’t help themselves. Ironically, neither could he as he laughed so hard that tears were rolling down his face. After all, it had been over three and a half decades ago.

“ It was a Napalm bomb ’, he explained; ‘Friendly Fire’ from a SkyRaider in the village of Trang Bang, 25 miles North West of Saigon.”

“Most of the right side of my lower body was burned, blistered and scarred. Unfortunately, I developed an infection but at least I didn’t die. That’s why I never wear shorts. “

“You mean our own military plane fucked you up?”

Henry asked shaken by surprise.

“Shit happens.” Serge answered.

“Can you get it up?” Max was curious.

“I’m gay. Serge admitted. I like it in the ass”!

Silence swept the room until suddenly, Henry inquires; “you’re a fucken-fairy?”

“Watch your mouth! Clarence interjected instantly as he fumed. He’s our Pal.”

“I’m sorry. Henry apologized; I never imagined as you hid it so well?”

“I was embarrassed. Serge fesses up and came clean. I was a POW in Nam for three years from that day on but I was considered MIA until I escaped. The Viet Cong use to beat me. A few raped me. Most of them laughed at and made fun of me because I was deformed and functional on a part time basis. The war changed my sex life, my dreams and my views. Psychologically, I struggle to keep my sanity. Jack helps.”

The other three Amigos’ were stunned. They didn’t say a word as Serge continued with his confession. “I’ve been seeing Melvin now for over twelve years. I never met anyone so gentle or more sympatric than him. He’s twenty years younger than I am but, he Love’s me and I Love him! He’s my only family besides Social Security. We had a secret rendezvous in Mexico for the first five days. He is the one who found the Place.”

Serge’s declaration brought tears to their eyes, he was a Survivor whom was dealt a tough hand and deals with it. “Lucy seen you talking with some younger guy.” Henry remembered. “That was my Melvin. Serge admitted; My Soul Mate! When ever people get along, it is a Divine Blessing. Peaceful Co-Existence is a Miracle amongst God’s Miracles --- Human Beings.”

“Where does Melvin live?” Clarence asked?

“He lives with his Mother whom is an invalid. He takes care of her 24/7 as he works from home on the internet. He has his hands full but he doesn’t have the heart to put her away.”

“Does his Mother know about the two of you?” Max inquired.

“She was disappointed at first, being Catholic and having Dreams of Grand-Children. But, I think the biggest let down was her Passion for Piano. She has a portable keyboard that she plays, propped up in her bed. She had visions of playing --- one day for Melvin as he walked down the isle with his bride. She still practices even though she accepted us as a Unit in the Eyes of God. She Loves Melvin! I only hope that she doesn’t resent me?”

Silence prevailed as the conversation ended until Clarence stood up and broke it as he padded Serge on the back and said; “good-nite, its been one heck of a day. ”

On his way up the stairs, he yelled back--- “Call Melvin in the morning and tell him that we’ll be right over to help him pack! He and his Mother are moving in --- Immediately! “

Instantly, Serge cried --- Tears of Joy. Deep down, he knew that the Amigos’ would understand and accept him for what he was. But first, he had to accept it. He was glad that he finally did! He downed another shot as did the other two.

“Does Melvin know about the book-making operation?” “Max asked with concern. “He’s cool! Serge replied. He was at Woodstock. He still tokes occasionally.”

“I thought that you were against drugs?” Henry interjected with surprise.

“How the hell do you think I survived two wars? A little herb ain’t so bad. Shit, it was legalized in Hawaii for doctors to prescribe it to the terminally ill but I believe that that got over turned.”

“So I heard”; Recalled Max. It should be legalized! “ “Someday it will! Henry predicted. Prohibition doesn’t work. It ensures organized crime. It is the root to evil. We should educate and regulate, not eradicate drugs, booze, illicit sex or gambling.”

“Vices give the People a way to --- Cope and the Secular Powers that be; know it? Ironically, the churches promote bingo, while the states are obsessed with more and more lottery revenue not to mention taxes. And then, we have the Organized Underworld which thrives on gambling, sex, and the smuggling of drugs as well as illegal aliens. “

“Money is man’s god! Serge interjected. As long as the Secular Powers that Be; are making a profit, nothing will change. Corruption will continue unless we unite and make a difference. “

“Have you ever wondered how drugs get into this country? He asked. A commodity of Choice! Can you spell Lucrative? Can you smell Mena? Drugs are a National Disaster which is responsible for crime and prostitution as junkies must support their habit. Drugs ruin lives, just ask Clarence. “

“The market in opium, heroin, cocaine and marijuana in the USA generates a gross volume of business in excess of \$130 billion US a year. The importing, sale and distribution of drugs is an enterprise that generates more revenue than any of the largest multinational corporations in the world. It makes the gross volume of illegal drugs in the US greater than the gross national product of all but a dozen nations in the world.”

“Power corrupts? “ Max shouted.

“Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Henry added.

“The whole legal system needs an overhaul! Serge demanded. Our government is at the Mercy of a Secret Government, which hides behind National Security. Ironically, Corporate Security is the name of the game. If the public knew the truth, there would be riots, chaos, Mayhem --- civil-war. “

“It’s hard to trust a government which adheres to ‘A Need to Know Basis ‘. Max was adamant. It’s even harder to respect a system which has double standards and special privileges. Ironically, some are innocent until proven guilty, as others are guilty until proven innocent. And then, unfortunately, there are those whom are beyond prosecution ---no matter what? It’s a Damn Shame!”

“Damn Straight!” Serge fumed.

“Perhaps, Max added; perhaps it’s no small wonder that the World has mixed feelings about Americans? Thanks to our political, economical and diplomatic actions per corporate motives? Can you spell Sanctions? Are we not responsible for our government? Isn’t out government; suppose to answer to us --- We the People? ”

“Unfortunately, he continued; war generates money? Ironically, obsolete weapons are a ga-zillion dollar enterprise. Some like to play god as they play one country against another for Special Interests. But, he warned sadly, nuclear weapons are a different animal which jeopardizes Life itself. “

Both Serge and Henry nodded in agreement. Suddenly Max began laughing. Serge and Henry were both offended as the topic was no laughing matter. Perhaps that’s why they say not to discuss politics or religion when you are drinking.

“What’s so funny?” Henry asked bitterly.

“A poem that I wrote a few years ago; do you want to hear it?”

“Poetry;” Henry sighed shaking his head?

“Go ahead, spit it out.”

Capital Hill

(The show must go on)

Our government is the circus.
Our politicians are the clowns.
The press has a field-day with the coverage.
We, the people are the audience.
The performance is sad, entertaining and quite amusing
But, how long can it go on?
Whose gonna pay for production?
And, what will the ultimate price literally be?

“Bingo! Henry exclaimed; you’re both right as man better heed Abe Lincoln’s prophetic warning about ‘enthroned corporations’. Are we not in; ‘an era of corruption in high places’ as he predicted? Is the ‘money power of our country endeavoring to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of not only our people’ but, people all over the world?”

“‘Will the wealth be aggravated in a few hands’? And, will our ‘republic be destroyed’? Who stands to profit from this emerging so called ‘New World Order; International-Imperialistic-Corporations? Will Average Joe or Mom and Pop stores be able to survive in spite of major corporate control’?”

“Enough is enough --- already.” Max interrupted.
 “Denial is inexcusable ignorance. War, oppression, injustice, inequality, hatred, racism and exploitation are Divine No No’s. Political and economic-tyranny are Divine No No’s. Poverty is absurd in this Age of Abundance.”

“Freedom entails responsibility, as man is responsible for each other. Arrogance is insulting, detrimental and, counter-to purpose and principles of Humanity. What we have is but a Semblance of Freedom.” Serge warned.

“Someday soon, Henry assured the shit is going to hit the fan. Man can no longer afford to ‘Put material things above people, vengeance before love and greed before God’. Denial is the Anti-Christ, which ensures Hypocrisy not Democracy. The world is so fucked up cause man made it that way through manipulation, exploitation and deprivation as Greed interferes with Need.”

“Abuse of power is ghastly evil, contrary to Humanity as Trust is Sacred.” Henry continued lividly. “Ironically Religions con us out of our money in exchange for Hope as it preys upon our guilt and shame while the politicians rob us blind. And, let us not underestimate Science and Technology.”

“In 1931, Nikolai Bukharin, president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences; addressed the International Congress on the History of Science in London with this question: ‘Shall science enslave the masses or serve them?’” Go Figure? Food for thought as class has its privileges. Thus, health insurance determines treatment as disease is a multi-billion dollar industry. In the case of cancer alone, the average victim spends \$50, 000.00 before dying. Unfortunately, prescription drug manufacturing is a highly lucrative business with almost no competition; thanks to the merger of Bristol-Myers with Squibb, which now controls 50% of the market.”

“Is it any small wonder why Capitalism defeated Communism? He asked more livid. Ultimately, in 1959, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev vowed that: ‘Deception and drugs are our first two strategic echelons in the war with capitalism.’ But”, he added, “somehow, some way --- the elite powers that be’, the imperialists’, have managed to turn his theory into a reality.”

“Perhaps they joined forces so to speak --- chosen few and chosen few in the name of profit as capitalism thrives on drugs and deception as it deceives and betrays the public of the entire world. Welcome to our Nightmare --- inhumanity, impunity of the evil elite as greed has escalated from reason to madness. “

Serge just sat there listening attentively. He didn't mean to rile the guys up but he was glad that he did. He couldn't help but wonder if we're all mad or where we are headed? Just last week on TV, he learned that some corporation just implanted a microchip, the size of a sliver with medical data on it in the arm of the inventor. His history can be read with a scanner and it works!

Now they want to market it further as they proposed it for kids as a safety precaution to keep track of them as well as old folks whom are senile or dementia. There is also talk about it being used for airport security workers as well as nuclear power plant personal. It sounds good, but what else will it lead to?

There is also talk of a National ID Card. How long before we are all required to have a chip embedded in each of us for our own safety or shall I clarify --- keep track of us like a herd of cattle? Will our financial data be required, race, sexual preference, religion? Will we be able to buy or sell without the 'Mark of the Beast', as the Bible predicts? 666?

Suddenly he shouted “PU! It stinks, it's as if every day is like Thanksgiving“.

“Thanksgiving”; Echoed out of the two Amigos' mouths --- simultaneously?

“You guys never heard the Thanksgiving story? “ Serge asked as they looked so dumbfounded, shaking their heads no.

“Well then, let me enlighten you. “

It's Thanksgiving Day, and Papa Tony is carving the turkey. His whole family is sitting at the dining-room table watching him. Suddenly, Papa Tony lets out a loud, smelly-old-fart. Some laughter breaks out. "You a Pig You," Papa Tony says, shaking his finger at Grand-ma! "You gotta No Shame?"

Grand-ma puts her head down with instant tears in her eyes; hiding her face. Uncle Joe laughs and shouts; "let's all have a Toast to Grand-Ma!" They all drink their wine and dinner goes on as if nothing had happened.

"Poor Grand-ma: "Max sympathizes.

"Poor Us is more like it!" Serge corrected.

"How can we pretend that our government; is A-OK when in fact, it is corrupted by lobbyists, soft money, international capital, loopholes and technicalities. We laugh at Plausible; Deniability but someday mankind will be crying, as Anarchy is a real possibility."

"Class has it privileges. Henry admitted. But, necessity speaks for itself. You have to fight for your rights or else you're fucked. The 'Haves'; Best Help the 'Have-Nots', or else this country; is going to be divided. They best come together and conquer the greedy evil corruptions before it's too late. Laws must evolve just as man evolves. Even Constitutions must evolve, conform to their time. It's time to address the Issues and question Authority."

"Love is the Law of Eternity. Max proclaimed. Someday, man will practice Jesus' Golden Rule ---'Love God with all his Heart, Mind and Soul and his Neighbors as Himself! "

"Fuck that God shit. Serge objected angrily. "Man created this mess and man must correct it. A dog licks his balls because he can. Poverty, corruption, neglect and abuse all exist because we continue to allow it. It's a matter of Co-Dependency as Relationships, Relationships; Relationships. Co-Operation is the Key. Unfortunately, mankind is accustomed to and has taken a Shine to Greed."

“You Guys are All Talk and No Action!” Clarence interrupted the conversation.

“How long have you been there; “Max asked with surprise?

“I forgot my glasses and got mesmerized by your discussion. You guys were so engrossed that you didn’t even notice that I was here. So I copped a squat and eavesdropped. It is very intrusting, so profound and yet Scary. So what are We going to do about it? “

“What do you mean? “ Henry asked abruptly.

“Unfortunately, mankind in general has to do what he has to do as they are vain and blinded by their vanity. Clarence replied. Too few scrutinize or study themselves as a source of danger which --- lingers inside of man --- Himself. Thus, *** ‘This evil that belongs to me, is my responsibility‘. --- (***) Old Jewish Proverb)

“Man invented corruption, he continued; but why do we -- - Tolerate it? Who gave Authority --- Authority? We, the People Did. That’s Who and They Better Not Forget It! Are we going to just sit back and Laugh Now until Mankind --- literally Cries Later. What about all of those whom suffer in Poverty --- Now? Are they not crying --- Now? “

“It is our Duty to Do; what ought to Be Done or Else, Poverty and Corruption will escalate until it is too late as both are Our responsibility --- Always. WE must question Authority and stand up for Humanity. Abe Lincoln, JFK, Dr. King, RFK and Malcolm X all got assassinated for getting involved as they fought for Civil Rights. God Bless their Souls! “

The other three guys just sat there speechless as Clarence clarified. “Poverty is Pathetic. It’s an Inexcusable Reflection of Mankind, a Testament to our Ignorance; an Example of our Arrested Development. It is the Ultimate Eyesore as ‘Need Knows No Season ‘. They too, have Dreams. Can you imagine just praying for a full belly? “

The guys just shook their heads --- No, with guilt written all over their face. "Glory be, Clarence preached FDR's Message; 'When the World is Free Everywhere, Free to speak and express himself, Free to Worship God in his own way, Free from Want and Free from Fear --- Everywhere, All the Time!' "

"Amen"; echoed' throughout the room as Clarence continued! "There is a fine line between Religion and Politics. Perhaps Gandhi put it best when he came face to face with the Spirit of Truth. Thus, he proclaimed; 'To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means.' "

Clarence got up and headed back upstairs without his glasses again. Half way up, he stopped and said: "I think we should all Count our Blessings tonight, say a few prayers and Think about Making a Difference while we sleep. It's our Duty to get --- Involved --- Now! Good-nite. "

Serge grabbed the bottle of Jack. He started to pour but both Max and Henry declined as they had had enough and followed Clarence's lead.

Serge sat there all alone, sipping his shot of bourbon in private gratification. He felt at Peace in spite of the fact that he just killed his friend. He was elated that he confessed his secrets as a heavy load was lifted from his chest. Ironically, he had no guilt about playing god and sending Thomas Home to 'the Keeper of the Stars'. Suddenly, he wondered if there was a God or Two or Three; as the Universe was so precise. He knew one thing for sure. He didn't believe in hell. For hell; was man-made; --- Korea, Viet Nam, Prudent Paradise. At least he had the privilege of eliminating one.

He realized that evil was just wrong living as it is live --- spelled backwards. He poured one more drink and went out to the porch to look up at the Stars and the Moon. They were so enchanting, so serene and picturesque. He Loved Life in spite of it's Adversity, its Mysteries and Surprises. "Good Luck Old Buddy; "he whispered as he held up his last shot and drank it down before he headed upstairs to call Melvin.

Upstairs, Clarence couldn't sleep as Death and Corruption were on his restless mind. The world seems to grow madder and madder by the day as all of his Friends were dying. But, at least they lived a full life. Tears rolled down his face as he thought of his teenage son William who died of a drug overdose when he was 18 years old.

Clarence never got over it and Peg caught him crying a few times as he blamed himself for not seeing the signs. He told peg that he felt that he should do something to help other parents prevent drug abuse. Perhaps now was the time? Clarence grabbed a pen and a paper and wrote a short story for children entitled 'Surprise'.

When he finished reading what he wrote he felt as if some burden was released.

He woke Peg up and she was delighted by the short story. She believed that the characters were brilliant as they would surely spark the interest of children. She told him she would help him create a website --- www.B4HEART.com.

At breakfast, Word spread fast that Thomas perished in his sleep. Nobody suspected the contrary. Clarence tried to call Chi to make sure about a will or any family but, he was in Mexico meeting with Carlos's family.

As far as anybody knew, Thomas had no relatives to speak of. He worked on cruise ships his entire life. He would brag that he circled the globe several times and that he had kids all over the World. But, he never stayed in one place long enough to establish any relationships.

Originally, he was from Jamaica. He got scared off by some voodoo when he was a teen and never went back. Something about some walking zombies? Peg reminded them that he wanted to be cremated and ashes spread throughout Marge's Paradise in the Garden of Remembrance. She ordered two Special Trees to be planted, one in Honor of Thomas and the other in Honor of Carlos. Chi could make the necessary arrangements --- Tomorrow when he got back.

After breakfast, The Four Amigos' took two vans over to Melvin's house and helped him pack. He and his Mother moved in that day --- to Welcomed Arms! Melvin's Mother Viola was tickled pink. She had heard so much Good about the place.

Both fit right in. Melvin moved into Serge's room and Viola into Marge's old room. She liked her new motorized-wheel-chair and the fact that there was; elevators to cruise the entire complex. The Garden brought tears to her eyes.

Rumor spread fast about Mel and Serge --- sleeping together. It was a hoot as there was some snickering and bickering. But, after all, Sexy Sue was Bi-Sexual as was Jacques whom; gave Melvin a double take. Serge spotted it and gave him the Evil Eye.

Thomas was cremated two days latter after a simple ceremony at Social Security. As it turned out, he had no known family and left all his money to the Commune via a will which was entrusted to Chi. The Two Trees were also planted that day near Marge's Tree. A week or so later, his ashes were also scattered throughout Marge's Paradise.

Two months latter, there was a Special-Surprise-Wedding for Melvin and Serge --- Theirs. Viola arrange it and even played the Baby Grand Piano as her son and his Lover --- walked down the Isle, Together as a Unit in the Eyes of God in spite of the fact that it wasn't legal in the eyes of our laws. The Commune paid for their Honeymoon in Hawaii. Both Serge and Melvin cried as did Viola, Peg, Lucy, etc; etc.

While they were away on their honeymoon, America got an unwelcome surprise as the 'Twin Towers' were destroyed in New York on 9/11. Unfortunately, terrorism hit home, Americans got a rude awakening --- beyond belief. But in her unsettling time of crisis, RE-United; ---Together in the Name of Patriotism in spite of different beliefs.

As always, poverty persisted as did corruption however, we Americans have a different out look on life. The Evil-Doers caused chaos and confusion but they underestimated the American People. Priorities changed as Family and Friends, Hugs and Kisses became important again. In essence reality set in as Life is so Fragile yet Precious. Our Flag, our Symbol of Freedom was appreciated again. We were proud of our country in spite of all its faults.

Chapter Ten ---- The Awakenings

Mel and Serge were stranded a few extra days in Hawaii as the FAA shut down all airports in the US. Fear was evident on Melvin's face when the other three Amigos picked them up at the airport. The press prolonged fear --- World-Wide as panic and disbelief focused on anthrax, a new house-hold word. Unfortunately, Hanson Baldwin's CFR address was reeking --- havoc.

'We have opened for all time the lid of Pandora's Box of evils. We cannot push the genie back into the box. We may not like it, but we must face it. Atomic bombs, biological agents and other weapons of mass destruction are now a permanent part of man's society; and no perfect physical system of control is possible for all these weapons.'

The flags that hung on all the houses gave Clarence a sense of confidence as Threats became Reality. Perhaps, he thought; perhaps Abe was right when he called America ---'The Last Best Hope for Earth'. "God Bless America! " He shouted in the car on the way home to Social Security. "It's now or never. We must get involved again! Terrorism is only the tip of the iceberg. Nations must Choose --- Terrorism or Humanity! But, we must also address and confront Poverty as well as Corruption as they too are vital to the Resolve'. Ironically; it's all interrelated".

The Amigos all nodded as Clarence continued. "Terrorism is alarming when it hits home, but, so is Poverty and Corruption. Historically, politics is a dirty game. Unfortunately, so is religion which is man-made. Ironically, Karl Marx called religion 'the opiate of the masses'. A medicine which contains --- Opium? "

"Man is blinded by religion! Serge interjected. Dogma, ritual obedience; in the name of Fear, Guilt, Shame or even Eternal Damnation; it messes with people's heads? But; when men declare war in the name of God, that's ludicrous?"

“The World is in a State of Confusion? Melvin incited. Consumed by fear, the 9-11 travesty; was awful shocking. Its terror was enough to drive us back to God and to Each-other as its evil united Americans --- Again! For America smelled Blood; --- It’s Own! “

“Unfortunately, he continued, tension mounts in anticipation of more terrorism. Mankind is nervous. Tormented by uncertainty, we fear World War III? But, he added; Peace is within. Therefore, man best turn to Love! “

“Love, Peace Stop the War;” Henry shouted! Everybody busted out laughing including the Old Hippie. “I wish I had a Joint”, Henry reminisced.

“Fuck them drugs!” Clarence fumed. I lost my son to a drug overdose and that marijuana and morphine messed with Thomas’s thinking. Thank God he died with a clear head! Drugs ruin lives Period! Terrorism, Greed, Corruption, Drugs and Poverty are All Evil.”

Silence crept into the vehicle as Clarence’s anger made everybody think twice about drugs. “Now that we have accessed the problems; evil, Clarence assured with a Passion in his Eyes and Faith in his Heart; now we must initiate action. We need a grass-root-effort --- A Collective Convergence. We must address the issues and prepare a plan. Together, We Shall Over-Come Evil“.

“Amen! Amen! ” Echoed throughout the car as they all vowed to deal with the problem. Ironically, America Declared War on Terrorism and They, The Amigos’; Declared War on Greed, Corruption, Drugs and Poverty. Deep down, they knew that the bottom line was power and control of money and energy as the majority struggles to survive.

Clarence went to bed early that night with worldly troubles on his mind. Anxiety was beginning to take its toll as he pondered the future of mankind. Who is going to pay for these sins? Who’s going to pay for this war on terrorism; he wondered; our children?

This war will cost a fortune not to mention our 6.5 Trillion Dollar National Debt? Will Mankind survive? He cringed at the thought not to mention temptation; with all its opportunistic hypocrites operating under false pretenses, hidden agendas. Ironically, Ezekiel entered his mind --- ‘without vision, the people will perish’.

He tossed and turned as he tried to fall asleep and forget about reality. Ironically, he surmised that both greed as well as need can transform Loyalty into hostility as Humanity has a Rendezvous with Redemption.

Clarence’s thoughts were rambunctious as he fell into dreamland --- lost, astray, deep in a dark enchanting forest. Confounded by doubt and fear, he chose to flee from our world; since it was so cruel and corrupt. Drifting away --- running scared, angry, confused and yet bewildered and entranced by This --- Mystical woodland; he shouted out loud --- “Why God? Why?”

Suddenly, he saw an Incandescent Light, Particles of Hope --- Dancing, Peeking through the thick Trees ahead of him. Curiously, he anxiously hurried towards that radiant area. The closer he came to this brilliant glow, the brighter it got.

Finally, he was out of the woods as he reached his focal Point; in a most Beautiful Garden of Ether which he could have never imagined. Astonished, as he assimilated his Attitude, Attention and Awareness; he knew that he was on Sacred Holy Ground, some Harmonious Realm --- Ineffable Paradise.

Spellbound, he fell to his knees --- astonished, amazed, overjoyed and in a state of awe, beyond Pure Contemplation – Exultation. Embraced by an exuberant feeling of Pure Perpetual Love --- Divine Chemistry, he melted in Rapture as he felt the presence of Sacred Holiness. His Heart beat in tune with overwhelming yet soothing soft-music --- Bliss, which hailed from the Ultimate Divine.

Nonchalantly, he looked up into the sky and there --- She was, totally refreshing and as clear as the Full Moon entertaining The darkest night; The Virgin Mary, Mother of Jesus --- hovering amongst a cloud, floating closer and closer towards him. She was So Beautiful, So Immaculate; --- a bare testimonial of the Absolute as a luminous white aura surrounded her completely. In fact, She; looked as if she were made of light.

Ambushed by relentless Peace, Happy-tears rolled down his face. Her elegance was so bright that he felt unworthy to look at her. He turned his head away. He wanted to stare but he couldn't until she assured him; "Fear not; Relax, your Heart is Pure and you may look as your eyes won't hurt."

Ironically, she didn't talk? Their minds, in fact --- their thoughts were engaged in communication as if by some visible sound-waves --- vibrating, emanating and attracting and exchanging together as if magnetized? Mental Telepathy!

She smiled and told him, "your thoughts are true to your Heart and what he thought was right and just. But, she warned, time is running out. Then she quoted Apostle Paul; 'Proclaim the Word; be persistent whether it is convenient or inconvenient... for the time will come when people will not tolerate sound doctrine.' "

She finished by encouraging him to do his duty in the Name of World Peace and Humanity. For the World, she assured; "is Ready, Willing and Able; As it is Desperate for Love; So Follow Your Heart and; Live Your Dream!"

Overwhelmed and excited in a state of ecstasy --- an emotional overload of pure-high, he awoke with water in his ears and salt in his mouth. He wiped the tears from his face and gently shook Peg to wake her up and tell her all about his Blessed Experience. Half asleep, she replied: "that's nice", and rolled over --- back to sleep.

Clarence was more determined than ever to; Make a Difference. He realized that he couldn't run away from the troubles of the world any longer. Denial is evil. He must rise to the occasion. He visualized a World of Peace in his Mind's Eye and now was the time to go for it.

He vowed to do his homework and make a game plan. Suddenly, he thought of William Ellery Channing; 'There are seasons, in human affairs, of inward and outward Revolution, when new depths seem to be broken up in the soul, when new wants are unfolded in multitude; and a new and undefined good is thirsted for. These are periods when --- to dare is the highest wisdom.'

He smiled to himself as he knew that with a Whole Lot of Faith and a Little Help from his Friends, Chi and B4HEART.com, Thy Will, Will Be Done!

In the morning, Clarence told The Amigos and Peg about his Dream! Peg didn't even remember being woken up. They were all fascinated, as Clarence was so sincere and excited about both the Dream and www.B4HEART.com. Then Clarence read his short story, 'Surprise' to the guys. They thought it was cute. Peg took them all over to one of the computers and showed them what she and Clarence were working on for the past month as she brought up the B4HEART website. Henry laughed as he said that Oouey looked like Clarence and Olga like Peg. Everybody was impressed and all agreed that B4HEART.com was vital to Humanity.

They ordered B4Heart tee-shirts for the whole commune. Serge suggested that they have Signs and Badges made up stating; Oouey for Prez and Olga for Vive-Prez. Everybody laughed and then they decided it almost time to consult Chi for his Help and Support.

The shirts came in a week and the signs and buttons only took several days. When the bus rolled into Denny's for one of their late night Breakfast Tradition, it was a sight to be seen as every body sported their shirts and badges. All the customers and waitresses wanted to know who Oouey and Olga were and they all wanted a B4HEART tee-shirt. They were told that they could order one on B4HEART.com and that they would find out all about Oouey and Olga on the site as well!

Some people were curious and wanted to know now so Peg briefly explained that, "Oouey Gooey is a Simple Worm with a Simple Plan --- Love! He is Opposed; to drugs and is Devoted to Peace. As An Ambassador of Hope and Good-Will; he Believes Children are our Future and that hard-core-rap-music Robbed us of a Generation of Progress via violence, anger and hatred. His Mission is to Start; a Revolution, a Spiritual Revolution to Save Mankind from greed, poverty, hunger, drugs and corruption in the Name of Humanity.'

She explained that; "Oouey; Believes in a Spiritual Evolution --- that Someday; Mankind Will In Fact Literally Be Enlightened. She also emphasized that he was not a democrat or a republican but an Earthling with a Wife named Olga and 23 Offsprings. And that they live in the 'Rose Garden' in Delaware Park in Buffalo, New York. Peg also explained that Oouey had a Motto which he adopted from 'Peace Pilgrim', "To Overcome evil with Good, falsehood with Truth and hatred with Love." And, that he wants to Spread these Words-of-Wisdom-World-Wide via Dialog and Interaction.

AS Afghanistan was being bombed, America was dealing with the fallout of the Economic bomb. The four Aspiring Reformers marched into Chi's office again --- Unannounced. They were all wearing Flag Pins but, they had a radical proposition as they had their colors on. They sported their B4HEART tee-shirts with the words 'Humanity Envisioned And Realized Together'. Chi seen that look in their eyes and he knew he had his hands full as he seen it before. They were on a Mission --- hardcore serious and loaded for corruption. They were carrying signs and wearing Oouey and Olga Badges; Promoting Oouey for President and Olga for Vice President.

"What's up?" He asked as he prepared himself for war. "War is Hell"! Clarence fumed. Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida terrorist network are a bunch of Devils. They are twisting a sacred religion to promote themselves as they degrade their women and brainwash their young with anger and hatred. Their young will haunt us as they are conditioned to be Anti-American. Can you imagine a society where children are forbidden to sing, fly kites or make Snowmen? The Taliban regime is corrupt as it gets as it ensures misery and poverty and abuses youth and women."

Chi scratched his head as Clarence continued. "Their Philosophy of Death under-minds Life itself; suicide is insane. Life is a preparation for Death but, all must Respect Life as Life is; Precious. When Mankind learns the Difference between Fear and Faith, that's when we'll have Peace on Earth. 'Glory Be', he assured; when we have Faith in God, Self and Each Other; instead of fearing God, Self and Each Other. For Mankind must B4HEART! Humanity Envisioned And realized Together. We must never give up on God, Self or Each Other. What happened to America's motto --- 'In God We Trust?'"

"United we stand! Max shouted. Just look at how much money and effort resulted from 9/11; --- an outpouring of Love. Can you imagine if the World United in Love?"

"We've been thinking and we came up with some ideas that need readdressing! Henry informed him. If we're not careful, these new Anti-Terrorists Laws will lead to a Police State. What rights are we willing to relinquish next; Client-Attorney-Privilege, Free Speech; Our Right to Bare Arms? Are we willing to give up our Civil-Rights for National Security?"

"It's sad enough that our free-press/media is subjected to sanction by ownership while our educational system is curtailed through stipulations from foundations with grants and scholarships? It's; regulations, regulations, and more regulations? Go Figure? How long will it be before they read our E-mails or set limits on what we can say? How long before they tax the internet?"

"Will they cry Terrorism every time somebody speaks out against Government or its special Interests? Don't dictators regulate social behavior through fear and intimidation? Is slavery inevitable again? What about Human Rights, Basic Necessity; Food, Water, Shelter --- Survival? Poverty ain't prejudice! "

"Slavery is the epitome of evil! People are slaved by economics; Max was disgusted. Evil is when any government or establishment --- in the name of god or any secular power that be, imposes it's will or ulterior motives on others as it influences thinking so that it can control resources. Energy is the bottom line. Corporate greed is focused on access to and control of oil, fossil-fuel. Are we gonna use terrorism as an excuse to position our interests for oil? Greed has no business in National Security!"

"Why? Henry asked. Why doesn't our government focus and set up a program to encourage new technology, new sources of power? Why are they so obsessed with petroleum in spite of pollution? "

"Profit; Clarence cringed as he spit the word out; the common wealth of the elite few?"

"What about Hemp? " Max suggested.

"Hemp; Serge queried? Are you going to smoke it, get hi and forget about these problems? Perhaps you think that that will hurt the international drug trade? Why don't we put anthrax in the cocaine supply; that would wipe out their Business. "

“No, no, no! Max fumed; hemp as a source of Energy; which burns cleaner than oil. It is good for the ecology while it is growing and it would surely help our farmers. God knows our farmers are hurting as corporations are mass producing chemically induced crops. Besides fuel, it could be used for clothing and paper just to mention a few of it’s beneficial offerings.”

“How many inventers; are bought off or scared off by the powers that be? “ Henry asked. "What about hybrid cars?"

“Nikola Telsa wanted to give the World Free Energy! Serge exclaimed. When he died, the FBI raided his house and took a truck load of scientific documents? “

“There should be grants and incentives for inventers to work together and solve this economic crisis that is driving the World mad. Clarence interjected. It is the root cause of poverty, corruption and wars. Unfortunately, we all know that it is the lobbyists and soft money which prevent such legislation. Money talks as it is secular god. “

“We must define God! Serge surprised him. The World is on the verge of World War III in the Name of God, or Allah as Jesus is ignored. Israeli and the Palestinians are obsessed with the biblical West Bank and the Gaza Strip as tensions in the Mid-East escalate. The terrorists antagonize as they call for a Holy War. They want the US right smack in the middle of a Jihad as the Oslo Accords are forsaken”

“The Pledge to the Flag is in fact unconstitutional and we want to challenge it in Supreme Court! Max added. Religion is the bottom line. ”

“We want to erect a Wall of Shame to remind us of how evil corruption is! “ Henry continued. After this war, we must take our government back. There is a fine line between National Security and Corporate Security! We have to set the record straight. The lobbyists are ruining this country. Soft money is Evil as Greed is Tempting.”

“Greed is the brainchild of man. It eats a hole in your Soul. Clarence clarified. I had a ‘Dream’ and we created a website www.B4HEART.com. We Declared War on Greed, Corruption, Drugs and Poverty. Poverty and Corruption exist, because we allow them to exist? Terrorism exists because we ignored the terrorists. But, we also ignored God as well as our fellow man. “

“It’s our Duty to God, each other and our-selves; to Get Involved and Make a Difference --- Effort! Serge declared. Life is one big Risk, Love is our Goal! I’m not a damn democrat or a republican, I am a Human-Being, an Earthling. ”

“Love is the Key! “ Max proclaimed as Chi scratched his head --- stunned.

“Very interesting; he replied; now you want to Save; The World? You Go Amigos! “

“Take a gander at this! Henry was furious as he tossed a piece of paper on Chi’s desk. It’s no wonder the world is so fucked up as these scum run our country. We must put an end to double-standards.”

Chi looked at the paper but, he was already familiar with it via the internet. “Get the Jack! He commanded to Jamie over the intercom. The Amigos’ are on a Crusade. “

Jamie poured six shots and they toasted to Humanity. “May God Bless Us All! Chi continued; we are going to need it. On one hand, you guys are defending the Separation of Church and State and on the other; you all say that God must play a part in the governing of man by Defining God? “

“Exactly Clarence verified; our first Prez, the Father of Our Country --- George Washington himself, warned: ‘It’s impossible to govern a nation of people whom don’t believe in God or the Bible.’ “

“In fact, Henry added; on July 4th, 1776; our Forefathers declared in ‘ The Declaration of Independence ‘, our freedom from England, based on neglected equal rights --- endowed by our creator (God?). To be more exact, ‘certain unalienable rights --- Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we Mutually Pledge to each other, our Lives, our Fortunes, and our Sacred Honor.’ “

“It sure sounds to me, “ Max interjected; “ as if they, our Forefathers not only believed in God but, also trusted that He would protect and provide as they banded together in His Name, risking their lives, fortunes and honor for Humanity. “

“It’s all very simple! Serge Proclaimed. I’m not a big fan of God but; the bottom line is that God is Love. Love is Truth, which Relates to All. To ignore God as Love is a selfish abdication of responsibility to each other. God is not a double-edged sword, nor a pawn to be used in the name of man. The Skeptics deny Truth as the Sinister reinforce fear and despair. “

“Ironically, Clarence interrupted; Religion is personal and somewhat dramatic as each is Chosen. Perhaps that’s why --- when drafting up the U.S. Constitution, James Madison said that there was not to be ‘a shadow of right in government to meddle with religion’. However; there was no reference to God? “

Chi just sat there doing his job --- Listening.

“Unfortunately the word God is Taboo in our Public Schools as children are not allowed to pray there as prayer was declared unconstitutional. Henry added. Ironically, both the House and the Senate have a opening prayer before official business. In fact, they have two full time ministers? Who pays their salaries? And, he continued; why does the Supreme Court of the United States of America have the 'Ten Commandments', etched in it's marble walls?“

“You are referring to the recitation of the ‘Regents Prayer’ in public schools which violated the Establishment Clause of ‘ The First Amendment ’ --- (Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.) Thus, it was declared as unconstitutional. Chi knew the case well. *** The First Freedom by Nat Hentoff;

(Engel vs. Vitale) a mandated prayer for school children in New Hyde Park School System (New York); on June 25th, 1962.

““It was a nondenominational prayer, not belonging to or identifying with any particular religion --- which was forced on them. ‘ (Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents, our teachers, and our country.) However, the U.S. Supreme Court voted six to one that it was a No No. “

“Speaking for the majority, Justice Hugo Black explained that there can be no doubt that New York’s program of daily classroom invocation of God’s blessing as prescribed in the ‘Regent’s Prayer’ is a religious activity. It is a solemn avowal of divine faith and supplication for blessings of the Almighty.”

“That avowal of divine faith has no place in a public school because, said Justice Black, ‘the constitutional prohibition against laws respecting an establishment of religion must at least mean that in this country it is no part of the business of government to compose official prayers for any group of American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by government.’”

“The prestige and power of the government, said Black, cannot be used to influence, support or control the kinds of prayers to be said by the American people. The Establishment Clause was written into the First Amendment because the founders of our constitution knew from history, ‘that a union of government and religion tends to destroy government and to degrade religion. They also knew that’ religion is too personal, too sacred; too holy, to permit it’s unhallowed perversion’ by a civil magistrate...”

“That’s exactly our point! Serge exclaimed. The ‘Pledge to the Flag’, is just as guilty of violating ‘The Establishment Clause’; as was the ‘Regents Prayer’. It is unconstitutional, since it also refers to God as it implies to our young children --- that our government and it’s particular institutions, such as this school where the child is attending --- observes and recognizes as Fact, the existence of God and, pays respect to Him through this pledge or promise or solemn avowal. Thus, it corrupts and or influences the minds of young Atheists and Buddhists, thereby --- violating their Constitutional Rights of the First Amendment; by infringing upon and going against their beliefs or personal religion.”

“Bravo! Chi shouted. I see that you guys done your homework. I knew where you guys were headed. He continued. I often thought about it myself. Webster defines religion as --- ‘the service and worship of God or the supernatural; Commitment or devotion to religious faith or observance --- attitude, belief and practice’.”

“Unfortunately, he continued, it is most definitely a touchy subject as the pledge to the flag seems to be so sacred; An American Tradition and yet, a farce. Ironically, it’s unconstitutional on another point. Shall we recite it? “

The Four Amigos’ stood and faced the Flag with Chi and they all began:

Pledge to U.S. Flag

I pledge allegiance to the flag
Of the United States of America
And to the Republic for which it stands,
One nation under God
Indivisible with Liberty
And Justice for All.

“Historically, Chi admitted; this country adheres to double standards. Therefore it violates Liberty and Justice for Some. Thus, both the word ‘God’ and the word ‘all’ are the Culprits. Unfortunately, this Pledge was never challenged in the Supreme Court of the United States, especially on these issues. However, the right to refuse to recite and stand during the pledge was challenged twice. “

“First “, Chi continued, “in 1969, Mary Frain, a student of Jamaica H.S. in N.Y.; whom did not agree --- as the pledge professes --- that all Americans have equal justice. Therefore, in her opinion, the pledge was a farce, which she refused to recite or honor. The Federal District Court of N.Y. agreed with her and she was allowed to remain seated in the classroom during the Pledge to the Flag. “

“Perhaps Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas said it best.” Max interrupted. ““The right to dissent is the only thing that makes life tolerable the affairs of government could not be conducted by democratic standards without it.”“

Everybody shook their heads up and down nodding yes in a mutual agreement as Chi continued. ““Second --- in 1977, by Deborah Lipp, a sophomore at Mountain Lakes H.S. in N.J.; who was faced with expulsion for the same reason. Based on the First Amendment Of 1791, she also won in Federal District Court of N.J.”

As he finished, he stood up and announced; “Gentleman, it is my professional opinion that you guys have a valid case. If you wish to pursue it, I’ll gladly represent My Amigos’. “But”, he cautioned, “the wheels of justice move oh so slow. It could take years. “

“Not so fast! Clarence objected as Chi pulled www.B4HEART.com on his computer. We want to redress some other issues! “

“Double standards; Max shouted! We intend to erect a wall of shame as corruption speaks for itself.”

“We could modify the pledge with two words. Henry suggested. We could replace ‘God’ with ‘sun’; and ‘all’ with ‘some’. “

“No, No, No! “ Clarence pounded his fist on the table as Chi was impressed by the website. “You’re missing the point Henry. We have to redefine the word God. He is more than an acronym of Grand Organizing Designer. God is Love! Until we establish this as a fact, this world will continue to be fucked up. The Law of LOVE is the bottom line as it will transform ignorance into Humanity. Without the Law of Love, we shall Never have Liberty and Justice for All.

“It goes beyond our Pledge, Henry”; Serge agreed!
“If we set a precedent, perhaps someday we can realize Liberty and Justice for All ---- Worldwide. “

“Bingo! Chi shouted. You focused and defined your Goal --- Peace on Earth! Then he quoted Schopenhauer; ‘Before a problem achieves recognition as such, it has to go through three stages: In the first one it is laughed at. During the second it will be fought against; until in the third, it is accepted as being-self-evident““.

“Unfortunately, Clarence elaborated sadly; so many don’t even believe in God while others choose to ignore him? Take the ‘Story of the Two Fish in the Fish Bowl’ for instance. ‘The one fish asked; ‘Is there a God?’ ‘The other simply replied; ‘If there is no God, then who changes the water?’ ‘ “

“God helps those whom help themselves, but the greedy are helping them selves to everything. Corruption and Poverty are Ugly Evidence! Serge fumed. Ironically, they are both ignored as Greed hasn’t any Conscience? “

“Greed has become contagious as it is a ‘Dog Eat Dog’ World. Henry Joined in.

Abe Lincoln envisioned America as ‘This nation under Go ‘, with it’s democratic principles as; ‘The Last Best Hope of Earth!’ “Max exclaimed with excitement. “

“He also had a horrific fear! “ Clarence warned:
 “The money power preys upon the nation in times of peace and conspires against it in times of adversity. It is more despotic than monarchy, more insolent than autocracy, more selfish than bureaucracy. I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me and causes me to tremble for the safety of my country. Corporations have been enthroned, an era of corruption in high places will follow and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people. Until the wealth is aggravated in a few hands and the republic is destroyed. ‘ “

Abe Lincoln.

“Not if we can help it! “ Chi insisted.
 “Unfortunately, it is happening right Now! Clarence was adamant. And it will continue to happen as long as we let them get away with it! Look what that Scum Rosty did. He was indicted by a Federal Grand Jury on 17 felony charges alleging he plundered nearly \$ 700,000.00 from our government over a 20 year period and had ghost employees kick back paychecks to his office. He was facing 110 years in jail and \$ 365,000.00 in fines. “

“U.S. Attorney Eric H. Holder Jr. described Rostenkowski’s conduct as a ‘betrayal of the public trust for personal gain.’ And, then he had the balls to offer him --- the Chairman of our Ways and Means Committee; a plea-deal to one felony and Six Months in Jail? If you think that was a dumb offer, you’re not alone. Cause, so did Rosty as he refused and fired his lawyer? “

“Why did Holder offer him a plea deal? Clarence asked as the others shook their heads with suspicions.”

“They don’t want us, we the people to know what’s going on! Serge answered. They were afraid to go to court. They were afraid that he would talk. Go figure? Hush! Hush! “

“It’s outrageously putrid; Chi admitted with infuriated anger! It’s as if nobody cares. It’s a classic example as ‘Power corrupts and Absolute Power corrupts, Absolutely’. Talk about Leverage; A Vault Full of Dirty Secrets? “

Chi got the He-Bee-Gee-Bees as he considered out loud the charges that Rosty was facing. (** Buffalo news article.)

* Stealing more than \$ 500,000.00 from the U.S. Government.

* Pocketing at least \$ 50,000.00 in an illegal stamps-for-cash scheme through the House Post Office.

* Buying at least \$ 40,000.00 worth of gifts and giving them to friends and family.

* Putting at least 14 people on the congressional payroll who did ‘little or no work’ for the U.S. Gov.

* Using \$ 74,500.00 in House funds to pay for personal vehicles for himself and his family.

* Instructing a House engraver not to mention the work he had done for Rostenkowski on crystal sculptures when the engraver was subpoenaed by the Federal Grand Jury.

“How much time did he finally serve? “ Henry asked. “He pleaded guilty to two felony counts of missing public funds in a 1996 plea bargain. He spent a whole 451 Days in a Federal Minimum Security Prison --- Halfway House? Chi answered with disgust. And, oh yes, by the way --- he still is entitled to his annual Federal Pension of \$ 104,000.00”?

“It’s just the tip of the ice-berg. Max assured. Why was J. Edgar Hoover --- a Drag Queen, allowed to persist with all his personal secret documents and insists that there was no Mafia, which he hung out and associated with during his 50 year regime? When he died, U.S. Government Auditors audited his estate and found \$ 900.000.00 which he stole from the public. Ironically, his name is on top of some FBI offices as if he was some Hero? “

“Don’t forget Ollie North, he was convicted of a felony, but miraculously, it was overturned on a technicality? Henry reminded. And, back in 1992, George Bush Senior; Pardoned his bosses, former Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger and five others who had either been indicted or convicted of charges in the Iran-Contra affair. Unfortunately, rank does have its privileges --- especially when they get caught? “

“By the way, Ollie North lives in a million dollar house, with state of the art security system. He listed \$ 5,000,000.00 in assets when he had the Balls to run for the Senate as he vowed after his nomination: ‘they will never see Ollie North crawling up the steps of Capital Hill to kiss their big, fat rings!’ How does an officer in the USMC acquire so much net worth? “

Chi and The Amigos’ were fuming as Serge poured another shot of Jack and reminisced out loud. “Former Vice President Spiro Agnew was indicted by the FBI for taking cash from contractors (kickbacks). But, he made a deal, he resigned and got pardoned by Nixon. Is it any wonder why Tricky Dicky pardoned him? We had Watergate but, Nixon was not a Crook“?

“I believe that the --- Abe Lincoln, JFK, Dr. King, RFK, and Malcolm X assassinations were all conspiracies which were covered up. Max admitted. I don’t believe that Vincent Foster committed Suicide. And, I believe that the Monica Lewinsky Sex Trial was a big ploy --- blown out of proportion, to divert attention away from the White Water Scandal which ended up swept under the rug. Talk about a Miscarriage of Justice; Obstruction of Justice? It’s much bigger than we’ll ever know. “

“Clinton was a blatant perjurer and a pervert. Thanks to his disregard for perjury, our young kids think that it is OK to engage in oral-satisfaction as STDs are out of control --- Oral Herpes, Pharyngeal, and Oral Wart Virus? After all, he set a precedent and got away with perjury to boot and he was the Prez, so it must not be sex as he disclaimed. “

“Perjury is serious. Chi assured. It undermines the backbone of Humanity/Truth. Ironically, in the not so long ago past, man would testify by holding his testicles. Alas, the origin of the word ‘testify’ is rooted in Honor of the Sacred Family Jewels -- - Man’s Testicles.. Would you risk your balls, at the expense of perjury; as off with your testicles is in the back of your mind“?

“Absolutely Not“; The Amigos’ All testified as they held their Family Jewels!

““The devil can cite scripture for his purpose.““ Chi quoted Shakespeare. *** “Ex CIA Director Richard Helms was caught lying about a CIA operation that killed Chilean President Allende. When Helms was indicted and threatened with conviction for perjury to the Senate, he made it quite clear that in order to save himself; he would make public every dirty secret he knew. Alas, they took him serious as he was permitted to plea-bargain; a suspended sentence plus a fine that CIA Exes’ Association paid for him? Hush? Hush? Again and Again “Chi added fuel to the fire.

“Democracy as we know it is a Charade. Clarence professed. The CIA is akin to the Calloused Infrastructure of America, the Essence of Organized Corruption; the Backbone of the Secret Government within our government. Its motto is ---- ‘Ignorance is Bliss!’ They See No Evil! They Hear no Evil! They Speak No Truth as they Avoid Truth like some Plaque? Shame on Them, and Double Shame on Us; for allowing them to continue. By ignoring them, We Lead Them into Temptation as They continue to Deliver EVIL upon Us. “

*** The Man Who Kept the Secrets, Richard Helms and the CIA by Thomas Powers, N.Y. Knopf, 1979

"Abuse of power is ghastly evil, contrary to Humanity. Man is obsessed with power and money. Manipulation is his game --- Strategy. Old Ironsides needs an overhaul. "Chi professed. " Chief Justice Burger proclaimed: '... the people have the right and the ultimate power to change the system. Neither the laws nor the Constitution are too sacred to change and the decisions of judges are not holy writ.... We should not hesitate to make basic changes or discard mechanisms which do not work to the benefit of society.'"

"The first thing to go should be the electoral college." Henry interjected test fully. "It is nothing more than a ploy which ensures our two party; farce. Voting would take on new meaning when they can no longer zero in and cater to influence in key areas. They'd have to concentrate on and convince John Doe himself."

"Why are Federal Judges appointed for life?" Max asked sarcastically but seriously. "Why are our social values dictated by a Supreme Court? Why can't we as a free society choose or vote for ourselves?" He wondered out loud.

"Someday; 'Wonderland', will take on a new meaning as mankind stops wondering and --- 'I'll be judge, I'll be jury'. Said cunning old Fury; 'For I'll try the whole cause and, condemn you to death.' " Clarence reminded.

"Societies come and go. Chi replied. Governments fold and unfold accordingly as greed, apathy and deprivation --- Ignorance, take their toll. For people are the backbone of both society and government. Thus, government better take care of its people or else. "

"The government is turning its back on us. " Serge interrupted. "They cut Welfare and Medicare and promote Gambling and Corporate welfare. I often wonder where all that lottery money really goes. We pay taxes upon taxes. Where does all that money actually go? Why do we allow US Corporations to set up their Headquarters overseas as they avoid paying US Taxes?"

“What happened to the power to coin Money?” Max asked disgusted. “Are they really going to gamble our Social Security --- FICA in the Stock Market? What about our National Debt? The interest alone is staggering. Issues are issues. The National Debt is the total amount of money owed by the government; the federal budget deficit is the yearly amount by which spending exceeds revenue. Add up all the deficits (and subtract those few budget surpluses we've had) for the past 200+ years and you'll get the current National Debt. Unfortunately, we never pay anything on the National Debt but Politicians are always bragging or promising to keep the deficit under control?”

“Our Government is a Business and should be run like a business.” Clarence interjected. “When Corporate Executives Fuck up irresponsibly with incompetence, they're fired. When politics Fuck up irresponsibly or corruptly, they keep on getting reelected? We should fire the whole bunch!!”

“Perhaps the people don't realize that we have a right to peaceably assemble and petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Henry Suggested.

“Perhaps we should redefine the term --- 'Enemy of the State'” Chi suggested.

“For who's State is it any way? Whose Government is it? Economically, you Amigos' are absolutely right as there is indeed a fine line between National Security and Corporate Security and, that line is Greed --- the ' Commonwealth of the Elite Few.

“It is insulting, blatant stupidity --- when the people entrust their Faith and Fate to the Powers that Be for all the wrong reasons. Abuse of Power is evil and irresponsible. No government can survive if it continues to avoid issues or turn its back inhospitably on its citizens. A sure tell tale sign is when a Government addresses --- social, economical and political matters as Law and Order problems, self-serving excuses of Special Interests, to maintain control in the name of Secrecy and Shame.”

“Beware of a Government that doesn’t meet expectations or maintain confidence. Eventually, the Majority always wakes up from Wonderland. Someday mankind will stop wondering why Social Injustice exists on this Planet of Plenty! Why Inequality exists? Beware of the Fury of Poverty as there is no greater motivation than Hunger --- Momentum of Survival. “

Chi opened his desk drawer and pulled out a report of Share International, and read. “The world’s 225 richest people have a combined wealth of over \$ 1 trillion, equal to the annual income of the poorest 47% of the world’s people. Among the 4.4 billion people who live in developing countries, nearly 3 in 5 live without basic sanitation. Nearly 1 in 3, are without drinking water. 25% lack adequate housing. 1 in 5, live beyond the reach of modern health services. 1 in 5 children are undernourished and don’t get past grade five in school. In the U.S., some 12 million families are at risk of hunger and at least 700,000 people are homeless on any given night. “

“Can you ever imagine begging as your livelihood night and day --- year after year as pity is your life line? “ Serge asked his friends.

“No“, was the echo simultaneously through-out the room! “Can you imagine being exploited as slave labor? He continued as they all agreed by shaking their heads. I seen it all; unfortunately, so many woman and children are victims of sweat-shops as well as sex-shops in much of our World as Poverty is a product of Greed. “

“How can these so-called entrepreneurs, prominent businessmen, Corporate CEOs, etc. etc. ---sleep at night? They are such pathetic pukes. How can they be so unconscientiously? I wonder how many lives they drove to suicide”?

“Blessed is he whom reaches out and extends his hand across the World as an Act of Love in the Name of Peace. Clarence Preached. Arrogance is a Blatant Disgrace to Humanity, an Ode to Sorrow. Man is born to aid and alleviate suffering, not avoid it. Co-Operation is a must; Atomy and Sovereignty are birthrights of All as Earth is one Interdependent Family of Human Beings.”

“Glory Be when man ensures Dignity, not Poverty! “ Chi declared. We best deal with the disparity between the world’s ‘Haves’ and ‘Have-Nots’ as well as Corruption --- Now or Else“.

Chi agreed to get the ball rolling on the Unconstitutional Pledge to the Flag. But he said that it would take a few years to go through the channels. "Unfortunately, he stated; as he took out a copy of the United States Constitution and laid it on his desk; unfortunately the government had no business defining the word God which pertained to religion but they could promote their idea." Then he turned to the First Amendment of 1791 and read:

'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.

Or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech.

Or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, And; to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.'"

The Amigos' all understood as Chi agreed to set up a non profit organization B4H.E.A.R.T.; dedicated to fighting Corruption and Poverty. They also decided to erect a huge Wall of Shame on the Front Lawn of Social Security to remind Mankind of the scum whom, were proud of their ghastly deeds.

They had their work cut out for them --- Research. They all agreed that Hitler, Rosty, J. Edgar Hoover, O'sick-o bin Laden and Sadam Insane would be displayed on their wall as well as a brief description of their disregard for Humanity. They All Believed Whole-Heartedly that they would Make A Difference.

"Ironically, Clarence declared; from their evil, mankind as a whole learned and the World is now a better place. Someday, Mankind will Honor Jesus' Golden Rule ---'To Love God with all your Heart, Mind and Soul, and your neighbor as yourself'. Someday, money will be obsolete as those that have all the gold will no longer make the rules".

Chi poured one more round of shots and The Five Amigos' toasted to H.E.A.R.T.

"Semper Fidelas!" Serge shouted.

"Semper Fi"; Echoed the other Four Amigos. "Always Faithful!"

"Glory be; Chi added --- when Mankind is Always Faithful to God, Self and Each Other!"

Sensitive Henry was touched. He had tears in his eyes as he knelt down on his knees and began praying --- 'The Our Father'. The other Four joined him. Afterwards, Chi informed them that soon, Religion would have another out look on God and Creation!

"What do you mean?" Henry asked curiously.
"For some God forsaken reason", Chi enlightened them, "the press is keeping a lid on the fact that the Lost City of Atlantis was discovered right off the coast of Cuba. It is 2200 feet in the sea. They have aerial pictures of incredible structures. It's mind boggling. National Geographic is heading the whole operation as they are cutting the red-tape with Cuba."

"It sounds like a new out-look; of Life --- literally. "
Serge surmised.

"Wait until they find out about Mars!" Clarence added. They can't keep that and the UFO's a secret forever."

"Time will tell"! Henry put his two cents in before they left.

A few months went by slow but surely. Max returned home from his doctor's appointment with tears in his eyes. The Guys braced for bad news. "What's the prognosis?" Clarence asked with sincere concern.

"Dick-Do "; Max answered.

"What the fuck is Dick-Do?" Serge asked all confused.

"My stomach sticks out more than my dick do. " He laughed until he cried, coughing up blood. The other Amigos' pretended to laugh. They realized that he was really sick. His worst fear had come true, Max had to face it --- Death was on the horizon. He had been coughing up blood since Mexico. He thought that it was the tequila. He finally summoned up the courage to see his physician, tests, etc.

Terminal Lung Cancer was the diagnosis. "Six months, maybe a year; "was the answer to his ultimate question. Ironically he laughed as he realized that he had taken life for granted. Unfortunately, daily living itself was becoming a chore.

He overlooked his simple freedoms. The natural pleasures such as a cough, a fart, a laugh, a sneeze, a shit or piss as well as a breath and a cry which; became painful issues --- energy, which must be expressed and released.

"I gotta make the best of it. " He insisted. "Shock and Depression are for the weak. I had a full Life, Family/Amigos' --- The Commune. I had a hand in creating something Beautiful. Shit, we even destroyed hell. Maybe I can stretch it 2, even 3 years"!

The Guys were all speechless and sick to their stomachs. Max excused himself to go up to his room. He didn't know how to break the news to Anna.

Up the stairs Max went and down the hall until suddenly - --- an evil altercation sent him into flashback mode. The community's comfort was disrupted. Max is seeing Red. "Leave her alone, you degenerate bastard. " He shouted as a new orderly had Anna pinned up against the wall by her throat because she bumped into him by accident.

"Mind your own business pops". The low-life warned. "I'll give you pops. " Max retaliated with the memory of his broken leg on his mind. As he reached to confront the assailant, he turned around and punched Max right on the jaw.

He went flying into a medical cart, landed on the floor, cart on top of him; medicine, band-aids, gauze, etc. etc; all over the place. "Semper Fi", he yelled with scissors in his hand as he jumped up swinging the weapon into the heart of the scum --- killing him instantly.

Max went into shock. In fact, he fell to the floor and rolled into a ball like the fetal position. Anna was scared silent. She panicked desperately relieved that Max wasn't injured. She held him and rocked him like a baby as they both cried next to the dead body.

Unfortunately, it was supper time as the entire staff was there. Serge came up the stairs. "What the hell happened? He asked --- Dumbfounded. I thought I heard some yelling or commotion of some sort".

"Max went berserk because that thing was roughing me up after I bumped into him by accident. Then he hit Max and Max retaliated as he killed him dead. What are we going to do"? She cried as reality set in.

"Get some of the plastic that we use on the beds and a bucket and a mop and blanket ASAP".

"OK! OK"! She replied as she hurried and scurried about.

"Max, Max! Pull yourself together". Serge slapped his face till he responded. Have a sip of this". He ordered as he handed him a flask of JD.

"Thanks, I needed that. What did I do"? He asked.

"You executed a useless piece of shit. "

Anna returned with Serge's requests.

Serge told Max to help him wrap the body in the plastic and then the blanket. His plan was to hide the body on the third floor office so that they could think. Max and Anna cleaned up the blood while Serge wheeled the crap in a chair into the elevator and upstairs.

Serge helped them finish up when he returned before anybody else came up. Then he calmed them both down as he told them that Chi would take care of it. He said that he hid the body so that nobody would panic and besides, Social Security didn't need any scandal.

Next, he called Chi on his cell phone. He told him that there was a situation that needed his attention. Then the three of them finished the Jack Daniels before they went down to find the other Amigos.

Chi was there in a flash. He met the desperate Amigos' at the bar --- where Serge was filling Clarence and Henry in with the details. Max was in a daze, distraught and incoherent. Chi was confused as he heard them talking about getting rid of some body as the solution --- the easy way out?

"What's Up; my Amigos", he asked all concerned?

"Sorry, false alarm. Serge lied since they didn't want to involve him.

Chi scratched his head with perplexing doubt. He knew that they were lying. Perhaps even hiding something but, he trusted their judgment. After all, they trusted him with everything else.

"Alright then; but what's this about a body"?

"Oh, the cat"; Clarence also lied. Max ran Willy over by accident with the car. He's afraid to tell Lucy that he's dead because she is so damned sensitive. We're going to bury it and tell her that it ran away. "

Chi didn't believe a word but decided to play along with them for a while anyway. "Honesty is the best policy. He advised. Tell her the Truth."

Suddenly, Max came to his senses. I got 6 months to live? "He cried. "I killed an orderly whom was abusing Anna. I lost my head. I have lung cancer. Call the police I want to confess. God, I need a shot. "

"Relax Max. Chi suggested as he went to pour him another shot. The other Amigos were startled as they forgot all about the cancer. They didn't care about the piece of shit upstairs. Chi was speechless as he too drank.

"What's the cat's name? " He asked.

"He was new. His name tag said Leonard Nash. Serge answered. He had Anna by the throat because she bumped into her. Max saw him and went crazy. He punched him in the jaw, knocking him onto the floor as a medical cart fell on top of him. He responded with a pair of scissors instantly. It was purely self defense if not temporary insanity. "

“Where is the body? “

“I hid it on the third floor and we cleaned up the mess. “

“It sounds as if you all had temporary insanity. Chi surmised. We have to call the police, confess the panic and the attempted cover up. It’s the right thing to do. We’ll straighten it all out. Everything will workout. “

“What about Social Security? Clarence asked. Will they shut us down“?

“Its reputation has been spotless. There will be an investigation but we’ll keep it as quiet as possible. You better get rid of Thomas’s special plants, especially since he passed on. And, why don’t you CAN the book making operation for a while. You most certainly do not need the money. ”

They all agreed to give up Serge’s old hobby as well as Joe’s Special Garden. The police came, including homicide. They took statements and pictures. Max was arrested for manslaughter and the other three Amigos’ for ‘Stupidity in the First-Degree’ --- obstruction of justice.

They were released on bail the next day. Their pictures were in the paper again as the press had a field day. Social Security was in Jeopardy. Its future was in Chi’s hands. Everybody prayed that he was in God’s Grace.

A few months went by as Max hung in there. The Press backed off. The Wall of Shame was a Huge Attraction as it made International Headlines. People came from all over the World to see it. They even donated money to and many joined H.E.A.R.T. The Pope came and gave his Blessings!

Inscribed on ‘The Wall’, was a quote from Eisenhower : ‘ Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in a final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed‘! It was --- Dedicated to Humanity as a Reminder of Corporate Insanity!

The Commune organized an old folks-march on Washington. It was breath taking as wheel chairs glided up and down the streets. Ironically, the young got involved too as more than a million Americans protested. Even Max made the trip.

They carried signs --- Anti Greed, Anti Corruption and Anti Poverty. Old Joe enlisted the homeless whom also demonstrated. It was a sight to be seen.

Chi had his hands full between The Pledge to the Flag and the Commune's Nightmare. He wasn't worried about the moving of the body. Peg's Friends in High Places assured him that they would take care of it. He stalled Max's case, even though he knew that Max would be found Not Guilty by reason of temporary insanity not to mention self defense. He figured what the heck, he was dying anyway.

Unfortunately, he was worried about Humanity. What evil lurks in our own government he wondered as he thought of Herbert Hoover's warning; 'We may commit suicide from within by complaisance with evil, or by public tolerance of acceptance with evil, or by cynical acceptance of dishonor. These evils have defeated nations many times in the past.

Chi shook his head in disgust as he looked down and fingered through all the articles on his desk pertaining to Enron and its largest Bankruptcy in US history. The evidence spelled Scandal but, how deep does go? The independent accounting firm -- 'Arthur Andersen', admitted that it shredded data after they were told that there was going to be a Federal Investigation?

Chi scratched his head. Why did Enron conceal information about its financial problems? Why didn't the US Government act when they came to it for help? Why didn't the Government step in and freeze stock options before the Big Boys sold the Public and their own Employees out? Talk about inside information.

Perhaps it's no small wonder since at least fifteen high-ranking members of the Bush administration owned stock in its company last year. He wondered how many of them cashed in before the shit hit the fan? The term 'Silence is Golden', took on a new meaning -- Literally.

Incidentally, Enron chief Kenneth L. Lay has deep ties with the Bush Dynasty; President George W. Bush JR; himself, nick-named him 'Kenny Boy'. After all, he is Bush's largest financial benefactor with over \$550,000.00 in contributions to his political career. He even let the Bush campaign borrow Enron's corporate jet many times in pursuit of the Presidency. Ultimately, they took care of each other.

Ironically, Enron was granted Special Concessions from the then Governor Bush in 1999 through a series of secret meetings. They came up with a Grand-Father Clause, which waived permit requirements under the so called 'Care' Program --- the clean air responsibility enterprise. It allowed Enron to pollute without a permit and granted it immunity from prosecution for violating many environmental standards? And they say that soft money doesn't pay?

In April 2000, Lay played host to both Bush and his father, the former president at the Houston Astro's first home game of the season at 'Enron-Field'. Lay was co-chairman of former President Bush's 1990 Economic Summit for Industrialized Nations, which was held in Houston. He was also co-chairman for the Republican National Convention when it was held in Houston in 1992.

Chi was getting suspicious as he wondered if the Bush Dynasty owned any of Enron's stock or if they cashed in before it was worthless? For he also recalled that Neil Bush, the same Neil whom, was smack in the middle of the failed banks about a decade ago, which were bailed out with tax payers money; had ties to Enron too; Surprise, Surprise?

According to a 1993 New Yorker article, Neil lobbied Kuwaiti officials that year to select Enron to rebuild a power plant that was destroyed in the Iraqi invasion. It was also reported that in 1994, George W. Bush the Jr., phoned Argentina's public works minister in 1988 to ask him to award Enron a contract to build a natural gas pipeline. They got the contract as, "I felt pressed", the minister was quoted as saying; "it was not proper for him,(the son of the US President), to make that kind of call."

In 1995, the New York Times reported that the CIA, Central Intelligence Agency, assessed the strategies of the competing contractors for Enron in regards to a power generating station in India. Enron got the 2.8 Billion dollar contract, thanks to Frank G. Wisner, our US Ambassador to India. Of course, he was rewarded as he was placed on its board of directors.

Chi was fuming and then, he heard the world news. Enron didn't have to pay any Federal taxes for 1996, 1998, 1999, or 2000? In fact, they might be entitled to 380 million dollar refund for that period; Corporate Welfare?

"The system sucks!" He shouted. Politics, corporations and the CIA are in co-hoots as our military are the enforcers for Special Interests. But, who's best interest; are Special Interest concerned with? Chi was getting sick to his stomach as he remembered that George Bush Senior; was Head of the CIA at one time. Go figure?

Suddenly, the 2000 Presidential election had new meaning to him as the Florida ballots held not only the Destiny of the President but also --- Secrecy. They weren't playing as it involved high stakes. Systematically, 'Watergate', taught us a lesson and Congress passed the 'Presidential Records Act', making all presidential papers public --- 12 years after a president leaves office.

Perhaps you anxiously waited to hear some of the scandalous involvement of the powers that be --- White House-backed Nicaraguan Contras' cocaine dealings, the Iran-Contra Affair with CIA support for terrorists, corporate co-hoots with conflict of interests --- All which are a total embarrassment for the US as Taboo Truths.

Ironically, Bush Jr. Had to Win and He Had to Act since he inherited the evil 'sins of the father'; not to mention that most of his Administration is the same older Regan/Bush Cronies? Thus paranoid, in the spring of 2001 when the Truth was ready to be told, he postponed the release of historical corruption. Then in November of the same year, he issued the hell-mighty executive order which saved face as it effectively over turned the Presidential Records Act of 1978 by suppressing, sealing and in fact protecting the Regan and Bush I White House records as well as his own ass from defaming. Now, in the name of National security and the War on Terrorism, we best not question their Authority?

Prophetically, Chi had a horrific thought. What if they let those planes crash on 9/11 on purpose as a sacrificial collateral damage --- to instill Fear on Us, We, The People? Mysteriously, the anthrax scare didn't make any sense either as it not only smelled home grown but, what about the way it was selected and directed? It was icing on the cake. For now, they have an excuse as they have carte blanche in the name of National Security to assault our Liberties for some idealistic values?

"It's outrageous to say the least." He surmised as Popeye the Sailor man crossed his mind. 'That's all I can stand cause I can't stand no more!' How can men be so greedy? Man invented corruption. Man best confront it before it's too late.

He poured himself a Jack and sat there contemplating. Chi was pleased that we finally declared war on terrorism. But he wondered when we would declare war on greed and corruption, which ensure poverty as power corrupts? Will we let absolute power destroy what our Fore-Fathers created; through secrecy?

Ironically, he thought of 'Thou Shalt'. Must we slay him or tame him? For man is but a crazy animal. Some of us are crazier than others. Perhaps that's how we cope and survive ----
Considering that We Must Live with Each Other.

Why? He wondered. Why do we fight about God? Why doesn't Mankind serve each other? It was a moment of reckoning, as he focused on a book that he once read --- 'The Future of Man ', by Edward C. Randall. He was flabbergasted as he pondered:

'Truth has neither youth nor age,
it is, and ever has been a brother to reason;
it does not need the assistance of fame or science;
it has never been in the keeping of any particular class of men;
it is the heritage of all who live.'

Suddenly, Chi Laughed as he realized that life is but a series of issues as death awaits all. In between time, we must Choose --- Success or Truth? Blessed is he whom Answers the Call to Humanity --- LOVE. Let Our Voices Evolve --- Together!

God Help Us Commit to Peace as Hope Springs Eternal at the bottom of Pandora's Box.

God Bless America! God Bless the World! Let us B4HEART! For Life as we Live it is 'UnFucken-Believeable'!

The End!