

Reality Inspector Chapter 1

The morning fog was burning off; its edge was moving slowly back toward the ocean. John watched wisps and strands, which the cool breeze broke off the fog bank, melt into the air. Some of the fog's fingers lingered around plants in his garden before they disappeared into the earth. The tranquil quality of the morning always put him into a mellow, reflective mood. He poured more coffee into a cup, lit his pipe, and walked out into the garden. The chrysanthemums were already a foot high, and with warm nights they should reach their flowering stage in a few weeks. The ageratum were filled with buds that would open soon.

John pulled the business card from his pocket and reread it: Roger Acorn, Chief Administrator, Security Division, Federal Reserve Bank, San Francisco. Although he was not averse to conducting business at nine a.m., John seldom encouraged clients to arrive that early. But Mr. Acorn had said that it was urgent. Calling him at eight a.m. for a nine a.m. appointment--yes, that was urgent.

He walked over to his garden chair and sat down. Puffing on his pipe, he replayed the scene in his mind. Mr. Acorn was a middle-aged man, wearing a conservative, dark business suit; he looked like a typical and rather conventional representative of the government. He was someone whom you would not give a second glance at when passing on the street. Yes, that was the image the government wanted. Don't attract attention; be invisible; blend in with everyone else.

It would be an unusual case, even for a reality inspector. John had never had a computer for a client. The government, of course, was technically his client, for the government was paying the bill. But the Federal Reserve's main computer here in San Francisco was his real client, the "person" whose reality he would inspect. He would now have a chance to study the reality of a computer and the influence that the environment had on it.

He thought about how a computer was like a human being: all things had their place in the ecology of the world, and all things leaked, for the laws of thermodynamics applied to everything on spaceship earth. And so, even a computer would have leakage problems. But this computer (Mr. Acorn had called it ZAC) was being manipulated by sinister, outside forces.

ZAC, he thought, was a strange name. He recalled the line from Genesis: "And whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof." He wondered whether people saw computers as living creatures? The name ZAC moved through his mind triggering off thoughts. Did the name actually refer to the essential nature of the thing named? Certainly, in the days following Adam many people had believed that names contained magical power--power to control the thing named. But modern people usually took the position that names were only arbitrary labels, unlike those in medieval times who had believed that everything had its own proper name. In Tibet, supposedly, the monks were daily recording the many names of God. And when they finished, when all the names were recorded, then the world would end. Would those monks accept modern technology and use a computer to speed up their work?

ZAC. Did it signify zeta--alpha--kappa, a fraternity's name? Or was it zayin--aleph--kaph, a cabalistic code? The modern use of acronyms was perhaps out of control. People soon forgot what the letters stood for, and then the letters became a word with its own meaning. But did the meaning still refer back to the essential nature, or was it now arbitrary and conventional? It was like marijuana. Was the Latinate, botanical cannabis sativa closer to its essence than the popular street names?

Better backtrack, John thought, and focus on all the details that Mr. Acorn had presented. ZAC was having problems, and the Federal Reserve Bank was deeply worried, so worried that the Federal

Reserve had strayed from the conventional type of investigation to hire a reality inspector. Mr. Acorn did mention that the usual investigations were taking place, but they were, so far, a failure. And the ramifications of ZAC's problem were so serious that a novel approach had been deemed necessary.

Mr. Acorn had left not quite knowing what a reality inspector was. Did the name refer to the essence? John thought of his profession as a fusion of detective, psychologist, and shaman. But the fusion--the proper mixing--was the important part, not the three components. For other ingredients, more subtle, were also needed. Like making the proper soil for his delphiniums, he knew that nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium were necessary; but without the correct amount of trace minerals like calcium, zinc, and magnesium the delphiniums would not blossom properly.

Inspecting someone's reality required coordination of several skills with special knowledge. Usually, he pinpointed the energy leaks first. That was easy; it was only a matter of proper perception. Normally, he could rely primarily upon his vision, but he had learned early in his career that the other senses could discover hidden problems too. So he always conducted a complete test of his client. The main challenge, though, was prognosis; could he prescribe a cure? That was often difficult because the client might not wish to make the healing changes, might believe that the cure was worse than the disease.

A few times John had admitted defeat and collected his fee after only presenting his client with the choices. But usually he became so involved with the case at hand that he worked hard to inveigle his client to accept the necessary changes. Perhaps, here was where magic occurred. Luring people into revamping their reality often required entrapment and intense concentration.

Would he have a similar problem with ZAC? That was what intrigued him about this case. Here was a chance to apply his techniques directly to a non-human and, so he hoped, to discover the natural limits of his profession.

ZAC was having a reality problem, and its problem was affecting the economy of the United States. For the past several years inflation had been soaring at an incredible rate. Everyone had an opinion about the causes and solution. Not only were the economists and politicians arguing heatedly, but so were the people. Each had a pet theory that would surely work miracles, if only given a chance.

The Federal Reserve Bank had always maintained a ranking of the money that was in the U.S. economy. M-1 was the category for money in circulation, that is, cash and money in checking accounts. That money was readily available. The Federal Reserve had established a fiscal policy that when M-1 increased, money would be drained from the economy by raising the interest rate. The government hoped that such a procedure would tighten up the money supply and so curb inflation.

John thought again of Mr. Acorn, the standard government executive who was finally seeking out a novel and strange approach to ZAC's problem. ZAC was housed in the Mint on Hermann Street, and it was linked to the computers at the other Federal Reserve banks throughout the country. And ZAC had a reality crisis; it was acting strange and unpredictable.

John visualized the chronology that Mr. Acorn had given him. Beginning last year, ZAC had printed out large increases in M-1 every three or four weeks. And the Federal Reserve then had raised the interest rate. Fine. Predictable. But the M-1 increases were not real! An error had occurred in the computer. The Federal Reserve's computer specialists had tracked down an alien--yes, that was Mr. Acorn's word--program that had caused the error. Again fine. After the alien program had been expunged, the computer had functioned properly--for three or four weeks. Then the alien program had reappeared. But how? That was the concern. The Federal Reserve's security team was unable to discover how the alien program had been inserted, either originally or thereafter. So Mr. Acorn had told him.

The government, thus, had no choice but to turn to unorthodox methods when orthodoxy failed. ZAC was being contaminated by outside influences at regular intervals, and the alien program could upset the Federal Reserve's fiscal policy.

John turned off the sprinkling system and looked proudly about the garden. Most of the newly planted seedlings were showing growth. The pint of ladybugs should arrive soon, and, yes, there were plenty of aphids for those voracious eaters.

The fog bank was moving speedily westward toward the beach, and the sun was now warming the business community along Ocean Avenue. He went back into his office, took the cassette from the recorder, labeled it ZAC, and filed it away.

It was after eleven a.m. John looked across Keystone Way at the Rainbow Inn, a restaurant and social center for the neighborhood. Mary Rainbow, the proprietor, was no doubt busy preparing for the lunch crowd. He closed his office and walked over. He wanted to tell her about his new case before she was too busy.

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Other books by John Caris

Spenser Blake's Secret 2016

Spenser Blake has a secret about an important early Christian theme: the friendship of Jesus and Lazarus. Listening to his inner voice, he decides to hire Shasta Garland, author of the popular Peaches Peoples detective novels, to write a story conveying his controversial interpretation of the idea.

Dancing Magicians 2013

Magic and psychic feats abound while psi field intersects with cyberspace. Magician Ralph Garland, participating in psychic experiments at Institute of Consciousness-Imagination-Nous, alters the fabric of reality. His worldview shattered, he journeys through the secret mansion to regain his vital self. Shasta Garland, poet and novelist, embarks on a quest with a new mystery story featuring detectives from Peoples Investigations, who are caught in a web of role-playing wizards inhabiting the astral zone. The Garlands become entangled with others who are on their own path of self-discovery and renewal.

Hermes Beckons 2006

Alchemy and magic dominate. Magician Ralph Garland embarks on a quest to discover the secrets hidden in Hermes' craft. His research branches into diverse religious traditions, including the Neolithic goddess religion. He journeys beyond the veil and initiates a response from the spirit realm. Many strange experiences occur as he progresses in his alchemical studies, and when his conventional worldview disintegrates, he finally emerges through the portal of mysteries. In fear of losing his mind he opens his heart to his friend and love Shasta Garland, who is writing a new novel in her on-going detective series, one that will apply the theme of magic. She supports him in the healing process, and her nurturing strengthens his resolve to attain his mystical aspirations by producing a magical presentation of alchemy: The Alchemical Light Show. Together the couple evolve toward a spiritual healing and bonding.

Foundation for a New Consciousness 1987

Guided by Hermes' art, John Caris finds the path to a higher consciousness, one grounded in a holistic and alchemical matrix that encourages the growth of a healthy mind. All the arts—including music, art, and literature—are rooted in the sacred tradition and form the center of meditation. From ancient times the arts have conveyed mystical knowledge besides practical skills of their crafts. The treasure discovered on the golden path is paradoxical thinking, the key to a higher consciousness.